

THE ARGOSY.

NOVEMBER 1, 1872.

WITHIN THE MAZE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXXII.

ILL-OMENED CHANCES.

KARL ANDINNIAN was tempted bitterly to ask of his own heart whether he could have fallen under the displeasure of Heaven, so persistently did every fresh movement of his, intended for good, turn into an increased bank of danger. Poor Sir Adam had more need to question it than he; for nothing but ill-omened chances seemed to pursue him.

It is quite probable that when Ann Hopley and her flurried mistress decided to telegraph for Dr. Cavendish of Basham, they had thought, and hoped, that the doctor would come over by train, pass quietly on foot into the Maze, so pass out again, and the public be none the wiser. Dr. Cavendish, however, who was out when the telegram arrived, drove over later in his gig; and the gig, with the groom in it, paced before the Maze gate while the doctor was engaged with his patient inside.

Just then there occurred one of those unhappy chances. Mr. Moore, the surgeon, happened to walk by with his daughter, Jemima, and saw the gig—which he knew well—waiting about. It took him by surprise, as he had not heard that anyone was ill in the vicinity. The groom touched his hat, and Mr. Moore went up to him.

"Waiting for your master, James? Who is he with? Who is ill?"

"It's somebody down yonder, sir," replied the man, pointing back over his shoulder to indicate the Maze; but which action was not intelligible to the surgeon.

"Down where? At the Court?"

"No sir. At the Maze."

"At the Maze! Why, who can be ill there?" cried Mr. Moore.

"I don't know, sir. Master had a telegram, telling him to come."

At that moment Dr. Cavendish was seen to leave the gate and come towards his gig. Mr. Moore walked quickly forward to meet him, and the gig turned.

"I suppose you have been called to Mrs. Grey, doctor," observed the surgeon, as he shook hands. "Has she had a relapse? I wonder she did not send for me. I have but just given up attending her."

"Mrs. Grey?" returned the doctor. "Oh, no. It is a gentleman I have been called to see."

"What gentleman?" asked the surgeon, in surprise. "There's no gentleman at the Maze."

"One is there now. I don't know who it is. Some friend or relative of the lady's, probably. Ah, Miss Jemima! blooming as ever, I perceive," he broke off, as the young lady came slowly up. "Could you not give some of us pale, over-worked people, a receipt for those roses on your cheeks?"

"What is it that's the matter with him?" interposed the surgeon, leaving his daughter to burst into her giggle.

Dr. Cavendish put his arm within his friend's, led him beyond the hearing of Miss Jemima, and said a few words in a low tone.

"Why, the case must be a grave one!" exclaimed Mr. Moore, aloud.

"I think so. I don't like the symptoms at all. From some cause or other, too, it seems he has not had advice until now, which makes it all the more dangerous."

"By the way, doctor, as you are here, I wish you would spare five minutes to see a poor woman with me," said Mr. Moore, passing from the other subject. "It won't hinder you much longer than that."

"All right, Moore. Who is it?"

"It's the widow of that poor fellow who died from sun-stroke in the summer: Whittle. The woman has been ailing ever since, and very grave disease has now set in. I don't believe I shall save her; only yesterday it crossed my mind to wish you could see her. She lives just down below there; in one of the Cottages beyond Foxwood Court."

They got into the gig, the physician taking the reins, and telling his groom to follow on foot. Miss Jemima was left to make her own way home. She was rather a pretty girl, with a high colour, and a quantity of light brown curls, and her manners were straightforward and decisive. When the follies and vanities of youth should have been chased away by sound experience, allowing her naturally good sense to come to the top, she would, in all probability, be as strong-minded as her Aunt Diana, whom she already resembled in many respects.

The autumn evening was drawing on : twilight had set in. Miss Jemima stood a moment, deliberating which road she should take ; whether follow the gig, and go home round by the Court, or the other way. Of the two, the latter was the nearer, and the least lonely ; and she might—yes, she might—encounter Mr. Cattacomb on his way to or from St. Jerome's. Clearly it was the one to choose. Turning briskly round when the decision was made, she nearly ran against Mr. Strange. That gentleman had just got back from London, sent down again by the authorities at Scotland Yard, and was on his way from the station. The Maze had become an object of so much interest to him as to induce him to choose the long way round that would cause him to pass its gates, rather than take the direct road to the village. And here was another of those unfortunate accidents apparently springing out of sole chance ; for the detective saw the gig waiting, and had halted in a bend of the hedge to watch the colloquy of the doctors.

"Good gracious, is it you, Mr. Strange?" cried the young lady, beginning to giggle again. "Why, Mother Jinks declared this afternoon you had gone out for the day!"

"Did she? Well, when I stroll out I never know when I may get back : the country is more tempting in autumn than at any other season. That was a doctor's gig was it not, Miss Jemima?"

"Dr. Cavendish's, of Basham," replied Miss Jemima, who enjoyed the honour of a tolerable intimacy with Mrs. Jinks's lodger—as did most of the other young ladies frequenting the parson's rooms.

"He must have come over to see some one. I wonder who is ill?"

"Papa wondered, too, when he first saw the gig. It is somebody at the Maze."

"Do you know who?"

"Well, they seemed to talk as if it were a gentleman. I did not much notice."

"A gentleman?"

"I think so. I am sure they said 'he' and 'him.' Perhaps Mrs. Grey's husband has arrived. Whoever it is, he must be very ill, for I heard papa say the case must be 'grave,' and the Doctor called it 'dangerous.' They have gone on together now to see poor Hannah Whittle."

Not since he had had the affair in hand had the detective's ears been regaled with so palatable a dish. That Philip Salter had been taken ill with some malady or another sufficiently serious to necessitate the summoning of a doctor, he fully believed. Miss Jemima resumed.

"I must say, considering that papa is the medical attendant there, that Mrs. Grey might have had the good manners to consult him first."

"It may be the old gardener that's ill," observed the detective slowly, who had been turning his thoughts about.

"So it may," acquiesced Miss *Jemima*. "He's but a poor creaky old thing, by all accounts. But no—they would hardly go to the expense of telegraphing for a physician for him, with papa at hand."

"Oh, they telegraphed, did they?"

"So the groom said."

"The girl is right," thought the detective. "They'd not telegraph for *Hopley*. It is *Salter*. And they have called in a stranger from a distance in preference to Mr. Moore, close by. The latter might have talked to the neighbourhood. You have done me a wonderful service, young lady, if you did but know it."

Mr. Strange did not offer to attend her home, but suffered her to depart alone.

And Miss *Jemima*, who was rather fond of a little general flirtation, though she did perhaps favour one swain above all others, resented the slight in her heart. She consoled herself after the manner of the fox when he could not reach the grapes.

"He's nothing but a bear," said she, tossing her little vain head as she tripped away in the deepening gloom of the evening. "It is all for the best. We might have chanced to meet Mr. *Cattacomb*, and then he would have looked daggers at me. Or—my goodness me!—perhaps Aunt *Diana*."

Mr. Strange strolled on, revolving the aspect of affairs in his official mind. His next object must be to get to speak to Dr. *Cavendish* and learn whom it really was that he had been to see. Of course it was not absolutely beyond the cards of possibility that the sick man was *Hopley*. It was not impossible that Mrs. *Grey* might have some private and personal objection to the calling in again of Mr. Moore; or that the old man had been seized with some illness so alarming as to necessitate the services of a clever physician in preference to those of a general practitioner. He did not think any of this likely, but it *might* be; and only Dr. *Cavendish* could set it at rest.

Perhaps some slight hope animated him that he might obtain an immediate interview with Dr. *Cavendish* on the spot, as he returned from Mrs. *Whittle's* cottage. If so, he found it defeated. The gig came back with the two gentlemen in it, and it drove off direct to the village, not passing *Foxwood Court* at all, or the detective; but the latter was near enough to see it travel along. Mr. Moore was dropped at his own house, and the groom—who had been sent on there—taken up; and then the gig went on to *Basham*.

"I must see him somehow," decided the detective—"and the less time lost over it, the better. Of course a man, in the dangerously sick state this one is represented to be, cannot make himself scarce as quickly as one in health could; but *Salter* has not played at hide-and-seek so long to expose himself unnecessarily. He would make superhuman efforts to elude us, and rather get away dying than wait to be

taken. Better strike while the iron is hot. I must see the Doctor to-night."

He turned back to the station; and was just in time to watch the train for Basham go puffing out.

"That train has gone on before its time!" he cried in anger.

After reference to clocks and watches, it was found that it had gone on before its time by more than a minute. The station-master apologised: said the train was up three or four minutes too early; and, as no passengers were waiting to go on by it, he had given the signal to start rather too soon. Mr. Strange gave the master in return a bit of his mind; but he could not recall the train, and had to wait for the next.

The consequence of this was, that he did not reach Basham until past nine o'clock. Inquiring for the residence of Dr. Cavendish, he was directed to a substantial-looking house near the market-place. A boy in buttons, who came to the door, said the Doctor was not at home.

"I particularly wish to see him," said Mr. Strange. "Will he be long?"

"Well, I don't know," replied the boy, indifferently; who, like the rest of his tribe, had no objection to indulge in semi-insolence when it might be done with safety. "Master don't never hardly see patients at this hour. None of 'em cares to come at night-time."

"I am not a patient. My business with Dr. Cavendish is private and urgent. I will wait until he comes in."

The boy, not daring to make objection to this, ushered the visitor into a small room that he called the study. It had one gas-light burning; just enough to illumine the bookshelves and a white bust or two that stood in the corners on pedestals. Here Mr. Strange was left to his reflections.

He had plenty of food for them. That Salter was at the Maze, he felt as sure of as though he had already seen him. Superintendent Game had informed him who Smith the agent had acknowledged himself to be—Salter's cousin—and stated his own views of the motives that induced his residence at Foxwood. This was an additional thread in the web of belief Mr. Strange was weaving; a confirmatory link that seemed all but conclusive. In the short period that elapsed between his interview with Nurse Chaffen, *chez elle*, and his run up to London, he had seen his friend Giles, the footman, and by dint of helping that gentleman to trace days back and recall events, had arrived at a fact that could neither be disputed nor controverted—namely, that it could not have been Sir Karl Andinnian who was seen at the Maze by her and the surgeon. On that evening, Sir Karl, his wife, and Miss Blake had gone to a dinner party at a few miles' distance. At the self-same minute of time that the event at the Maze took place, they were seated

with the rest of the company at the dinner-table, Mr. Giles himself standing behind in waiting. This was a fact; and had Miss Blake taken a little trouble to ascertain from Nurse Chaffen *which* evening it was the mysterious gentleman had presented himself to view, and then recalled the day of the dinner, she would have discovered the fallacy of her belief in supposing him to have been Sir Karl.

Mr. Strange had, however, discovered it, and that was unfortunately more to the purpose. Whatever might be the object of Sir Karl's private visits to the Maze—and upon that point Mr. Strange's opinion did not change, and he had laughed quietly over it with the superintendent—it was not Sir Karl who was seen that night. It was a great point to have ascertained: and the detective thought he had rarely held stronger cards at any game of chance than were in his hands now. That Mrs. Grey would prove to be Salter's sister, he entertained no doubt of.

But the waiting was somewhat weary. Ten o'clock. Unless Dr. Cavendish made his appearance shortly, Mr. Strange would lose the last train, and have the pleasure of walking all the way from Basham. He was standing before one of the busts—the late Sir Robert Peel's—when the door opened, and there entered a quiet, lady-like woman, with cordial manners and a homely face. It was Mrs. Cavendish.

"I am so sorry you should have to wait so long for my husband," she said. "If I knew where he was gone, I would send to him: but he did not happen to tell me before he went out. Your business with him is of importance, I hear."

"Yes, madam: of importance to myself. Perhaps he will not be much longer now."

"I should think not. Will you allow me to send you in a glass of wine?"

He thanked her, but declined it; and she went away again. A short while, and a latch-key was heard in the house door, denoting the return of its master. Some few words were exchanged in the hall between Dr. Cavendish and his wife—and the former entered: a short, quick-speaking man, with grey whiskers.

As a matter so much of course that it hardly needs mentioning, the detective had to be no less crafty in conducting this interview than he was in some other matters. To have said to Dr. Cavendish, "I want from you a description of the patient you were called to see to-day, that I may ascertain whether it be indeed an escaped criminal of whom I am in search," would have been to close the doctor's mouth. It was true that he might open his cards entirely and say, "I am Detective Tatton from Scotland Yard, and I require you in the name of the law to give me all the information you can about the patient:" and, in that case it was possible that the doctor might deem himself obliged to give it. But he preferred to keep that master-stroke in hand, and try another way.

He possessed pleasant manners, and had a winning way with him—it has been already said; he spoke as a gentleman. Sitting down close to the doctor, he began inquiring in an earnest tone after the new patient at the Maze, and spoke so feelingly about patients in general, that he half gained the physician's heart.

"You are some close friend of the gentleman's?" observed Dr. Cavendish. And the word "gentleman" set the one great doubt at rest.

"I am most deeply interested in him," said the detective: and the unsuspicious doctor never noticed the really sophisticated nature of the answer.

"Well, I am sorry to tell you that I think him very ill. I don't know what they can have been about not to call in advice before." And in a few short words he stated what disease the symptoms seemed to threaten.

It startled the detective. He was sufficiently acquainted with surgery to know that it was one of difficulty and danger.

"Surely, Dr. Cavendish, he is not threatened with *that*?"

"I fear he is."

"Why, it will kill him! It is not curable, is it?"

"Rarely, if ever, when once it has certainly set in."

"And it kills soon."

"Generally."

Mr. Strange looked very blank. To hear that his prize might escape him by death—or might die close upon his capture, was eminently unsatisfactory. It would be a termination to the great affair he had never thought of; would tarnish all the laurels in a business point of view: and he was, besides, not a hard-hearted man.

"He is very young for that kind of thing, is he not, Doctor?"

"Yes, rather so."

"What brings it on, sir, in general?"

"Oh, various causes."

"Will trouble induce it?—I mean *great* trouble; anxiety; care?"

"Sometimes. Especially if there should be any hereditary tendency to it in the system."

"Well, I did not expect to hear this."

"Are you his brother?" asked the doctor, seeing how cut-up the visitor looked. "Not that I detect any likeness."

"No, I am not his brother; or any other relative. Do you consider it a hopeless case, Dr. Cavendish?"

"I have not said that. I should not be justified in saying it. In fact, I have not yet formed a positive opinion on the case, and cannot do so until I have examined further into it. All I say at present is, that I do not like the symptoms."

"And if the symptoms turn out to be what you fear; to threaten the malady you speak of—what then?"

"Why then there will be very little hope for him."

"You are going over to him again?"

"Of course. To-morrow. He is not in a state to be left without medical attendance."

"How long do you think it has been coming on, doctor?"

"I cannot tell you that. Not less than a twelvemonth, if it be what I fear."

Mr. Strange played with his watch-chain. He wanted the description of the man yet—though, in fact, he felt so sure as hardly to need it, only that detectives do not leave anything to chance.

"Would you mind telling me what you think of his looks, Dr. Cavendish?"

"Oh, as to his looks, they are the best part about him. His face is somewhat worn and pallid, but it is a very handsome face. I never saw a nicer set of teeth. His hair and short beard seem to have gone grey prematurely, for I should scarcely give him forty years."

"He is only five-and-thirty," spoke the detective, thinking of Salter. And that, as the reader may recall, was also about the age of Sir Adam.

"Only that? Then in looks he has prematurely aged."

"In his prime, say two or three years ago, he was as good-looking a man as one would wish to see," observed the detective, preparing to give a gratuitous description of Salter. "A fine, tall, upright figure, strongly built withal; and a pleasant, handsome, frank face, with fine dark eyes and hair, and a colour fresh as a rose."

"Ay," acquiesced the physician: "I only saw him in bed, and he is now much changed, but I should judge that would be just the description that once applied to him. You seem to hint at some great trouble or sorrow that he has gone through: he gives me just that idea. Of what nature was it?—if I may ask."

"It was trouble that was brought on by himself—and *that* is always the most trying to bear. As to its nature—you must pardon me for declining to particularize it, Dr. Cavendish, but I am really not at liberty to do so. Do not put the refusal down to discourtesy. It is not yet over; and the chances are that you will certainly hear all about it in a day or two."

Dr. Cavendish nodded. He assumed the words to imply that the patient himself would enlighten him. As to the detective, his mission was over; and well over. He had learnt all he wanted: what he had suspected was confirmed.

"That beautiful young woman, living alone at the Maze—what relative is she of his?" asked the doctor, as his visitor rose and took up his hat.

"His sister," was the rather hazardous answer.

"Oh, his sister. Mr. Moore could not make out who the patient was. He thought it might be the husband who had returned. When

I asked his name, to write a prescription for the chemist, Mrs. Grey said I might put it in hers—Grey."

"I thank you greatly for your courtesy, Dr. Cavendish."

"You are welcome," said the doctor. "Mind, I have not expressed any certain opinion as to his non-recovery. Don't go and alarm him. What I have said to you was said in confidence."

"You may depend upon me. Good-night."

Mr. Detective Strange had to walk from Basham, for the last train was gone and his return half-ticket useless. Basham police-station was nearly opposite the doctor's, and he stepped in there to leave a message on his way. In the satisfaction his visit had afforded him, he did not at all mind the night-walk: on the morrow, the long-sought-for Salter, who had dodged them so vexatiously, would be in their hands; the prey would have fallen. A satisfaction, however, that was not without alloy, in the damping circumstances that encompassed the man's state of health. And for that he could but feel compassion.

Midnight was chiming from the clock at Foxwood as he reached the Maze—for he preferred to take that roundabout way. Halting at the gate, he looked about and listened for a minute or two. Then he let himself in with his master-key, and went through the labyrinth.

The house lay in silence. All seemed still as the grave. There was no light, no sound, no token of illness inside; no, nor even of inmates. He gently put the said key in the entrance-door to see if it would yield. No: the door was not only locked but bolted and barred. He went to the summer-house, leading up from the underground places, and found the trap-door there also bolted and barred within. All was as secure as wary hands could make it.

"And it is welcome to remain so until to-morrow," breathed the detective as he turned to thread his silent steps back through the maze; "but then, Mr. Philip Salter, you are mine. Neither bolts nor bars can save you then."

And he finally let himself out again at the gate with that ingenious instrument, the key. To be polite, we will apply a French name to it, and call it a *passe-partout*.

But Dr. Cavendish, reflecting afterwards upon the interview, rather wondered who the stranger was, and whence he had come; and remembered then that he had totally omitted to ask his name.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ANN HOPLEY STARTLED.

THE morning sun was chasing the dew from the grass: and the lawn at the Maze, glittering so brightly in the welcome rays, told no tales of the strange feet that had, unbidden and unsuspected, trodden it in the night. Mrs. Grey, looking wondrously pretty and delicate in her white

morning gown, with her golden hair as bright as the sunshine, sat at breakfast in a little room whose window was beside the entrance porch. Her baby, wide awake, but quiet and good, lay covered up on a sofa in its night-dress. She was talking to it as she ate her breakfast, and the wide-open little eyes were turned to her as if it understood.

"Good little darling! Sweet, gentle baby! It does not scream and fight-as other babies do: no never. It is mamma's own precious treasure—and mamma is going to dress it presently, and put on its pretty worked robe. Oh, baby, baby!" she broke off, her mood changing, and the distress at her heart rising to the surface, above the momentary make-believe dalliance, "if we could but be at rest as others are! We should be happier than the day has hours in it."

The accession of illness, attacking Sir Adam on the previous day, the great risk they ran in calling in a doctor to him, had shaken poor Rose's equanimity to the centre. She strove to be brave always, for his sake; she had been in the habit of keeping in, as well as she could, the signs of the dread that ever lay upon her, and she had done so in a degree yesterday. But in the evening, when the doctor had safely gone, and the day and its troubles were over, she had yielded to a sudden fit of hysterical weeping. Her husband came into the room in the midst of it. He partly soothed, partly scolded her: where was the use of fretting, he asked; better take matters as they came. With almost convulsive efforts she swallowed her sobs and dried her eyes; and turned the tables on him by gently reproaching him with getting up, when Dr. Cavendish had peremptorily enjoined him to stay in bed. Sir Adam laughed at that: saying he felt none the worse for his fainting fit, or whatever it was, and was not going to lie a-bed for all the doctors in Christendom.

The cheery morning sun is a great restorer—a gladdening comforter: and Rose felt its influence. During her sleepless night, nothing could be more disheartening, nothing more gloomy, than the view pervading her mind: but this morning, with that glorious light from Heaven shining on all things, she and the earth alike revived under it. One great thing she felt incessant thankfulness for; it was a real mercy—that that miserable visitation of the detective and his policemen had not been delayed to the day of Sir Adam's illness. Had they caught him in bed, no earthly power, she thought, could have saved him. Karl, stealing over for a few minutes at night, to see for himself what this alarm of increased illness of his brother's could mean, had warned them both to be prepared, for he had reason to fancy the search might be repeated.

"This spot is getting more dangerous day by day," murmured Rose to herself, pouring out another cup of tea. "Oh, if we could but get away from it! London itself seems as though it would be safer than this."

She proceeded with her meal very slowly, her thoughts buried in schemes for their departure. Of late she had been ever weaving a web of possibility for it, a cunning plan of action: and she thought she had formed one. If necessary *she* would stay on at the Maze with her baby—oh, for months—for years even—so that Adam could but get away. Until this man, the detective—more feared by her, more dreadful to contemplate than any man born into the world yet—should take his departure from the place, nothing might be attempted: they could only remain still and quiet; taking what precautions they could against surprise and recapture, and she praying always that her husband might be spared this last crowning calamity: beyond which, if it took place, there would never more be anything in this world but blank despair.

Ann Hopley was upstairs, making the beds, and attending to matters there generally. Until her room was ready, and the fire had burnt up well to dress the baby by, Mrs. Grey would stay where she was: consequently she was at full liberty to linger over her breakfast. There was something in the extreme quietness of the little child, and in its passive face, that to a more experienced eye might have suggested doubts of its well-being: a perfectly healthy infant is apt to be as troublesome as it can be. Mrs. Grey suspected nothing. It had improved much since its baptism, and she supposed it to be getting strong and healthy. A soft, sweet, plaintive note escaped the child's lips.

"Yes, my baby. Mamma has not forgotten you. The room will soon be warm, and baby shall be dressed. And then mamma will wrap it up well and wrap herself up, and sit out of doors in the sunshine. And papa——"

The words died off in a low wail of horror; her heart seemed to die away in the faintness of sick despair. Something like a dark cloud had passed the window, shutting out for a moment the glad sunshine on the grass. It was Mr. Detective Strange: and, following closely on his heels, were the same two policemen, both of them this time in official clothes. They had come through the maze without warning, no doubt by the help of the *passe-partout*, and were making swiftly for the entrance-door—that lay open to the morning air. Her supposition was that they had fathomed Adam's system of concealment.

"God help us! God save and protect us!" breathed the poor wife, clasping her hands, and every drop of blood going out of her ashy face.

Mr. Strange, who had seen her through the window, was in the room without a moment's delay. He was courteous as before; he meant to be as considerate as the nature of his mission allowed him to be: and even before he had spoken a word, the keen, practised eye took in the visible signs. The small parlour, affording no possibility

for the concealment of Salter ; the baby on the sofa ; the breakfast, laid for one only, of which Mrs. Grey was partaking.

He was very sorry to be obliged to intrude upon her again : but he had orders once more to search the Maze, and could but obey them. And he begged her to believe that she herself, individually, should be subjected to no annoyance or restraint.

She made no answer : she could collect neither thoughts nor words to do so in her terrible fear. Mr. Strange retreated with a bow and closed the door again, making a mental comment upon her evident distress, her ghastly looks.

"There's no mistake, I think, that he is ready to our hands this time : her face alone would betray it. The curious thing is—where was he before ?"

Ann Hopley had finished the rooms, and was kneeling before the fire in her mistress's chamber, coaxing an obstinate piece of coal to burn, and blowing at it with her lips with all her might, when a slight noise caused her to turn. There stood Mr. Strange, a policeman at his elbow. She had not heard the entrance. Up she got, and stood staring ; unable to believe her eyes, and startled almost into screaming. But she knew how much lay upon her—almost life or death.

"Goodness bless me !" cried she, speaking freely, as she strove to brave it out, and shaking inwardly. "Whatever brings you folks here again ?"

"We have to go through the house once more."

"How did you get in ?"

"Quite legally," replied Mr. Strange. "I have to do my duty."

So entirely was she unprepared for this, and perhaps fearing that in her state of dismayed perplexity she might let fall some dangerous word of admission, feeling also that she could do no good to her master by staying, but might do harm, Ann Hopley withdrew, after giving the fire a gentle lift with the poker, and went down to the kitchen with a cool air, as if resolved not to let the affair interrupt her routine of work. Taking up a small basket of what she would have termed "fine things," recently washed, consisting of caps and bits of lace, and such like articles pertaining to the baby, she carried it out of doors beyond the end of the lawn, and began putting the things on gooseberry bushes to dry. Old Hopley was pottering about there, doing something to the celery bed. The policeman left on guard below, and standing so that his sight could command all things, surveyed her movements with a critical eye. She did not go out of his sight, but came back with the basket at once. While spreading the things, she had noted him watching her.

"I daresay I'm a kind of genteel prisoner," ran her thoughts. "If I attempt to go where those ugly eyes of his couldn't follow me, he might be for ordering me back, for fear I should be giving warning to the

master that they are here. Well, we can do nothing ; it is in Heaven's hands : better they came in to-day than yesterday !"

Mr. Detective Strange had rarely felt surer of anything than he was that he should find Philip Salter in bed, and capture him without the slightest difficulty in his sick state. It was not so to be. Very much to his amazement, there appeared to be no sign whatever of a sick man in the place. The rooms were all put in order for the day, the beds made ; nothing was different from what it had been at the time of his previous entrance. Seek as he would, his practised eye could find no trace—nay, no possibility—of any hidden chamber. In fact, there was none.

"Where the deuce can the fellow be?" mused Mr. Strange, gazing about him with a thoughtful air.

The underground places were visited with as little success, though the search he made was minute and careful. He could not understand it. That Salter had not been allowed time to escape out of doors, so rapid was their first approach, he knew ; but, nevertheless, the trees and grounds were well examined. Hopley lifted his poor bent back from his work in the celery-bed—from which, as the watching policeman could have testified, he had not stirred at all—to touch his straw hat when the detective passed. Mr. Strange answered by a nod, but did not accost him. To question the deaf old man would be only waste of time.

There was some mystery about all this ; a mystery he—even he—could not at present fathom. Just one possibility crossed his mind and was exceedingly unwelcome—that Salter, alarmed by the stir that was being made, had in truth got away. Got away, in spite of the precautions that he, Strange, in conjunction with the police at Basham, had been for the past day or two taking, secretly and unobserved.

He did not believe it. He did not wish to believe it. And, in truth, it seemed to him not to be possible, for more reasons than one. A man in the condition of health hinted at by Dr. Cavendish would be in no state for travelling. But still—with the Maze turned, as he honestly believed, inside out, and showing no signs or trace of Salter, where was he?

This took up some time. Ann Hopley had got her preparations for dinner forward, had answered the butcher's bell and taken in the meat : and by-and-by went across the garden again to cut two cauliflowers. She was coming back with them in her apron, when Mr. Strange met her and spoke.

"I have a question or two to put to you, Mrs. Hopley, which I must desire of you to answer—and to answer correctly. Otherwise I shall be obliged to summon you before the magistrates and compel your answers on your oath. If you are wise you will avoid giving me and yourself that trouble."

"As far as answering you goes, sir, I'd as soon answer as be silent," she returned, in a temperate but nevertheless injured tone. "But I must say that it puts my temper up to see an innocent and inoffensive young lady insulted as my poor mistress is. What has she done to be signalled out for such treatment? If she were not entirely unprotected here, a lone woman, you'd not dare to do it. You told her the other day you were in search of one Salter: and you know that you looked in every hole and corner our house has got, and must have satisfied yourself that no Salter was here. And yet, here you come in, searching again!"

"It was not Salter, I suppose, who was ill yesterday; for whom Dr. Cavendish was telegraphed?" rejoined Mr. Strange, significantly, having allowed her speech to run on to its end. "Perhaps you will tell me that?"

"Salter! That I'll take my oath it was not, sir."

"Who was it, then?"

"Well, sir, it was no one that you could have any concern with."

"I am the best judge of that. Who was it? Remember, I ask you in the name of the law, and you must answer me."

"That gentleman came down on a short visit to my mistress, and was taken ill while he stayed. It frightened us out of our senses; it was a fainting-fit, or something of that sort, but he looked for all the world like a man dead; and I ran off and telegraphed for a doctor."

The detective's eyes were searching Ann Hopley through and through. She did not flinch: and looked innocent as the day.

"What has become of him?"

"He went away again last night, sir."

"Went away, did he!"—in a mocking tone of incredulity.

"He did, sir. After the doctor left, he got up and dressed and came down, saying he was better. He didn't seem to think much of his illness; he had been as bad, he said, before. I confess I was surprised, myself, to hear he was going away, for I thought him not well enough to travel. But I believe he was obliged to go."

"What was his name?"

"I did not hear it, sir. He was here but a few hours in all."

"Look here, Mrs. Hopley: if you will tell me where that gentleman came from, and what his name is, I will give you five sovereigns."

Her eyes opened, apparently with the magnitude of the offer.

"I wish I could, sir. I'm sure I should be glad to earn all that, if it were in my power; for I don't believe Hopley will be able to work over-much longer, and we are laying up what little we can. I think he came from London, but I am not sure: and I think he's going off to some foreign country, for he and my mistress were talking of the sea. She wished him a good voyage and a safe landing. I heard her."

The detective paused. Was this true or false? "What was his name? Come, Mrs. Hopley?"

"Sir, I have said that I did not hear his name. He came without our expecting him, or I might have heard it beforehand. My mistress called him Edward: but of course that must be his Christian name. I understood him to be some relation of hers."

"I wonder what Hopley could tell me of this?" cried the detective, looking at her.

"Hopley could tell you nothing—but of course you are welcome to ask him, if you please. Hopley never saw him at all, as far as I know: and I did not say anything to the old man about it. If you question Hopley, sir, I must help you—you'd be a month making him hear, yourself."

"How is it that you keep your husband in ignorance of things?—as you seem to do."

"Of what things, sir?" rejoined the woman. "I'm sure I don't keep things from him: I have no things to keep. It's true I didn't tell him of this. I was uncommonly tired last night, for it had been a trying day, and full of work besides; and it takes no little exertion, I can testify, to make Hopley understand. One can't gossip with him as one can with people who have got their hearing."

This was no doubt true. The detective was frightfully at fault, and did not conceal from himself that he was. The woman seemed so honest, so open, so truthful; and yet he could have staked his professional fame that there lay mystery somewhere, and that the sick man had not gone away. Instinct, prevision—call it what you will—told him that the man was lying close to his hand—if he could only put that hand out in the right direction and lay it on him. Bending his head, he took a few steps about the grass: and Ann Hopley, hoping she was done with, went into the kitchen with her cauliflowers.

Letting them fall on to the dresser out of her apron, she gave a sharp look around, indoors and out. The detective was then conversing with his two policemen whom he had called up. Now was her time. Slipping off her shoes—though it was not likely her footsteps could be heard out on the lawn—she went across the passage, and opened the door of a little room: from which Mrs. Grey, in her fear and distress, had not dared to stir.

"Mistress," she whispered, "I must give you the clue of what I have been saying, lest they come and ask you questions too. It would never do for us to have two tales, you one and me another. Do you mind me, ma'am?"

"Go on, Ann. Yes."

"The sick gentleman came unexpectedly yesterday, and was taken sick here. You and me got frightened, and sent telegraphing off for a doctor. He got up after the doctor left—said he was better—didn't

seem to think much of his illness, said he had been as bad before. Went away again at night ; had to go ; was going off to sea, I thought, as I heard you wish him a good voyage and safe landing. I didn't know his name, I said ; only heard you call him Edward : thought it was some near relation of yours. Can you remember all this, ma'am ?"

"Oh yes. You had better go back, Ann. If they see you talking to me—oh, go back ! Ann, I—I feel as though I should die."

"Nay, but you must keep up," returned the woman, in a kind tone. "I'll bring you in a beat-up egg with a drop of wine in it. And, ma'am, you might say he was your brother, if they come to close questioning ; or brother-in-law. Don't fear. I'd lay all I'm worth they won't light upon the master. Twice they went within a yard or two of him, but——"

There was some noise. Ann Hopley broke off, closed the door softly, stole back again, and slipped her feet into her shoes. In less than a minute, when one of the men sauntered up, throwing his eyes through all the windows, she was in the scullery pumping water over her cauliflowers with as much noise as the pump would make.

Ann Hopley had judged correctly. Mr. Strange went to the little room, knocking for permission to enter, and there held an audience of its mistress. The baby lay on her lap now, fast asleep. His questions were tended to get a confirmation—or contradiction—of the servant's ready tale. Mrs. Grey, though in evident tremor, and looking only fit for a ghost, had caught the thread of her lesson well, and answered correctly. Some particulars she had to improvise ; for his questions were more minute than they had been to Ann Hopley.

"His name?—Grey. What relation?—Brother-in-law. What did he come down for?—To say good-bye before embarking for Australia. Where would he take ship?—She did not know ; forgot ; oh, now she remembered, it was Gravesend. Was she in the habit of seeing him?—Not often. He was never long together in one place, always travelling about. But was he in a fit state to travel?—She did not know. She had thought he looked very ill and begged him to remain at least until to-day, but he said he could not as he might lose his ship. Did he come down to Foxwood by train?—Oh yes, by train : there was no other way. And go up by the train?—To be sure. Which train?—One of the evening trains ; thought it was past eight when he left the Maze."

"It's the time for my mistress to take her egg," interposed Ann Hopley at this juncture, entering the room with the said egg in a tumbler. "I suppose she's at liberty to do it."

To this last little fling Mr. Strange answered nothing. Ann Hopley put the tumbler on the table and withdrew. Poor Mrs. Grey looked too weak and ill to lift it to her lips, and let it stay where it was.

"Can it possibly be true that you are still in search of Philip Salter?—here?" she asked, raising her troubled eyes to the detective's.

"It is quite true," he replied.

"And that you really believe him to be concealed here?"

"Madam, I could stake my life upon it."

She shook her head in feeble impotence, feeling how weak she was to combat this fixed belief. It was the old story over again. Nevertheless, she made one more effort. Mr. Strange was watching her.

"Sir, I do not know what to say, more than I said before. But I declare to you once again, as solemnly as I can ever speak anything in this life, as solemnly as I shall one day have to answer before my Maker, that I know nothing of Philip Salter. He never was here at all to my knowledge, later or earlier. Why will you not leave me in peace?"

Mr. Detective Strange began to think that he should have to leave her in peace. Twice had he carried this fortress by storm to search at will its every nook and corner: and searched in vain. Armed with great power though he was, the law would not justify these repeated forcible entries, and he might be called to account for exceeding his duty. But the man was there—as surely as the sun was in the heavens: and yet he could not unearth him. He began to think there must be caves underground impenetrable to the eye of man, with some invisible subtle entrance to them through the earth itself—and perhaps a subterranean passage communicating with Mr. Smith's abode opposite.

And so the second search ended as the first had done—in signal failure. Once more there was nothing left for the detective but to withdraw his men and himself, and to acknowledge that he was for the time defeated.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

UP THE SPOUTS AND DOWN THE DRAINS.

TURNING his face towards the railway station after quitting the Maze, with the view of making some inquiries, as to what passengers had alighted there the previous day and had gone back again—not that he believed one syllable of the tale told him—Mr. Strange encountered the gig of Dr. Cavendish bowling down. The physician recognized him and pulled up.

"What's this I hear, sir, about my patient's having gone off again?" cried the doctor in a sharp tone.

"I have heard the same," replied Mr. Strange. "But I don't believe it."

"Oh, then—you are not privy to it? You did not send him?"

"Not I, Dr. Cavendish. I went to the Maze betimes this morning to—to pay him a visit; and I was met with a tale that the bird had flown."

"I can tell you, sir, that he was in a *most unfit* state to travel," said the doctor, with angry emphasis. "I don't know what the consequences will be."

"Ay, if he had gone. But it's all moonshine."

"What do you mean by 'moonshine'? Has he gone, or has he not?"

"They say at the Maze he has; but I am sure he has not," was the answer. "There was a motive for his being denied to me, Dr. Cavendish; and so—and so—when I went in, this morning, they concocted an impromptu tale of his departure. That's what I think."

"They must have concocted it last night, then," said the doctor. "The letter, informing me of the circumstance, was posted last night at Foxwood—and therefore must have been written last night."

"Did they write to tell you he had gone?" asked the detective, after a slight pause.

"Mrs. Grey wrote. I got it by the post this morning. She would not trouble me to come over again, she said, as my patient had found himself obliged to leave last night. But I *have* troubled myself to come," added the doctor, wrathfully, "and to see about it; for, of all mad acts, that man's getting up from his bed yesterday, and starting off by a shaking railway train was the maddest. Drive on, James."

The groom touched the horse at the short command, and the animal sprang forward. Mr. Strange thought he would let the station alone for a bit, and loiter about where he was. This letter, written last night to tell of the departure, somewhat complicated matters.

A very short while, and the doctor came out again. Mr. Strange accosted him as he was about to step into his gig.

"Well, Dr. Cavendish, have you seen your patient?"

"No, I have not seen him," was the reply. "It is quite true that he is gone. I find he is embarking on a sea voyage, going off somewhere to the end of the world, and he had to go up, or forfeit his passage-money."

"They told you, then, what they told me. As, of course, they *would*," he added inwardly.

"But there's something in it I don't altogether understand," resumed the doctor. "Not a syllable was spoken by the patient yesterday to denote that he was on the move, or that he had been on the move, even only to journey down from London. On the contrary, I gathered, or fancied I gathered, from the tenor of his remarks that he had been for some time stationary, and would be stationary for an indefinite period to come. It was when I spoke to him about the necessity of keeping himself quiet and free from exertion. What I don't understand is why he should not candidly have told me that he had this voyage before him."

Mr. Strange did not answer. Various doubts were crowding upon

him. *Had* the man got away? in disguise, say? But no, he did not think it.

"By the way, you did not tell me your name," said the doctor, as he took his seat in the gig.

"My name! oh, did I not? My name is Tatton."

Dr. Cavendish bent down his head, and spoke in a low tone. His groom was adjusting the apron.

"You hinted last night at some great trouble that this gentleman was in, Mr. Tatton. I have been wondering whether that has to do with this sudden departure—whether he had reasons for being afraid to stay?"

"Just the question that has occurred to me, Dr. Cavendish," confessed the detective. "If he has gone away, it is fear that has driven him."

The gig bowled onwards. Mr. Strange stood still as he looked after it: and had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Philip Smith smoking his long pipe at his own window, and regarding the landscape with equanimity. He went on the other way.

"Good morning, Mr. Tatton."

Mr. Tatton turned on his heel and saluted Sir Karl Andinnian, who had followed him up. There was a degree of suppressed indignation in Karl's face, rarely seen.

"Is this true that I have just heard, Mr. Tatton," he began, calling the man by his true name—"that you have been again searching the Maze? My butler informs me that he saw you and two policemen quit it but now."

"It is true enough, Sir Karl. Salter is there. At least, he was there yesterday. There cannot be the slightest doubt that the sick man, to whom Dr. Cavendish was called, was Salter. I obtained a description of him from the doctor, and should have recognized it anywhere."

What was Karl to say? He could not attempt to deny that a sick man had been there. It was an unfortunate circumstance that Sir Adam, in regard to height and colour of hair, somewhat answered to the description of Philip Salter.

"Sir Karl, you must yourself see that there's a mystery somewhere," resumed the detective, who (having taken his clue from Superintendent Game) honestly believed that the baronet of Foxwood Court cared not a rap for Salter, and had no covert interest in the matter, beyond that of protecting his tenant at the Maze. "Some one, who is never seen by the public, is living at the Maze, that's certain; or, at any rate, dodging us there. Remember the gentleman in evening attire seen by the surgeon and nurse; and now there's this gentleman sick abed yesterday. These men could not be myths, Sir Karl. Who, then, are they?"

From sheer inability to advance any theory upon the point, lest he

should do mischief, Karl was silent. These repeated trials, these shocks of renewed dread, were getting more than he knew how to bear. Had they come upon Adam this morning? He did not dare to ask.

"As to the tale told me by the woman-servant and Mrs. Grey—that the sick gentleman was a relative who had come down by train and left again, it will not hold water," contemptuously resumed the detective. "Men don't go out for a day's journey when they are as ill as he is—no, nor take long sea-voyages. Why, if what Dr. Cavendish fears is correct, there cannot be many weeks of life left in the man he saw yesterday; neither, if it be so, can the man himself be unconscious of it."

Karl's heart stood still with its shock of pain.

"Did Dr. Cavendish tell you that, Mr. Tatton?"

"Yes. Well, now, Sir Karl, that man is at the Maze still—I am convinced of it; and that man is Salter."

"What did you find this morning?"

"Nothing. Nothing more than I found before. When I spoke of the sick man, and asked where he was, this cock-and-bull tale was told me: which, of course, they had got up among themselves."

"As I said before, Mr. Tatton, I feel certain—I am certain—that you will never find Salter at the Maze; from the simple fact that he is not there to find—I am sure of it. I must most earnestly protest against these repeated annoyances to my tenant, Mrs. Grey; and if you do not let her alone for the future, I shall see whether the law will not compel you. I do not—pray understand—I do not speak this in enmity to you, but simply to protect her."

"Of course I understand that, Sir Karl," was the ready answer. "There's no offence meant and none taken. But if you could put yourself in my place, you'd see my difficulty. Upon my word, I never was so mystified before. *There Salter is.* Other people can see him, and have seen him; and yet, when I search, I find no traces of him. A thought actually crossed my mind just now, whether there could be a subterranean passage from the Maze to Clematis Cottage, and that Salter makes his escape there to his cousin on occasion. I should like to search it."

"Come and do so at once," said Karl, half laughing. "Nothing convinces like ocular demonstration. I give you full permission, as owner of the cottage; I doubt not Smith will, as its tenant. Come and ask him."

The detective was in earnest, and they crossed over. Seeing them make for the gate, Mr. Smith came out of his house, pipe in hand. It was one of those long churchwardens. Karl spoke a few words of explanation. Mr. Detective Tatton suspected there might be secret rooms, or doors, or fugitives hidden in Clematis Cottage, and would

like to search it. After the first momentary look of surprise, the agent remained unruffled.

"Pass on, sir," said he, extending the thin end of his pipe to indicate the way. "You are welcome. Go where you please: search into every nook and corner; up the spouts and down the drains. If you surprise old Betty, tell her you're the plumber."

Mr. Strange took him at his word. Karl and the agent waited in the sitting room together.

"Is it after Sir Adam, sir?" breathed the agent.

"No. No suspicion of him. It's after the other I told you of. Hush. Better be silent."

The agent put his pipe away. Karl stood at the open window. Old Betty, the ancient servant, came in with a scared face. She was a little deaf, but not with a deafness like Hopley's over the way.

"It's all right, Betty," called out her master. "Only looking to the drains and spouts."

Satisfied in one sense of the word—for in truth it was readily seen by the most unprofessional eye that there were no means afforded for concealment in the shallow-built cottage—the officer soon joined them again. He had not had really a suspicion of the cottage, he said, by way of apology: it was merely a thought that crossed him. Mr. Smith however, did not seem inclined to take the matter quite indifferently now, and accosted him.

"Now that you are satisfied, sir, perhaps you will have no objection to tell me who the individual may be that you have fancied I would harbour in my house. I heard before from Sir Karl that you were after some one."

From the tone he spoke in, a very civil tone, tinged with mockery, the detective caught up the notion that Smith already knew: that Sir Karl must have told him: Therefore he saw no occasion for observing any reticence.

"When you know that we are looking for Philip Salter, you need not be so much surprised that we have cast a thought to this house as Salter's possible occasional refuge, Mr. Smith."

The very genuine astonishment that seized hold of Smith, pervading his every look and word and gesture, was enough to convince those who saw it that he was unprepared for the news.

"Philip Salter!" he exclaimed, gazing from one to the other, as if unable to believe. "*Philip Salter!* Why, is he here? Have you news that he is back in England?"

"We have news that he *is* here," said the detective blandly. "We suspect that he is concealed at the Maze. Did you not know it, Mr. Smith?"

Mr. Smith sat down in the chair that was behind him, as if sitting came easier than standing, in his veritable astonishment.

"As Heaven is my judge, it is a mistake," he declared. "Salter is not at the Maze; never has been. We have never heard that he is back in England."

"Did you know that he left England?"

"Yes. At least we had good reason to believe that he got away shortly after that dangerous escape of his. It's true it was never confirmed; but the confirmation to his family lies in the fact that we have never since heard of him, or from him."

"Never?"

"Never. Were he in England we should have been sure to have had some communication from him, had it only been an application for aid—for he could not live upon air; and outlets of earnings are here closed to him. One thing you and ourselves may alike rest assured of, Mr. Detective—that, once, he got safely away from the country, he would not venture into it again."

What with one disappointment and another, the detective almost questioned whether it were not as Smith said; and that Salter, so far as Foxwood was concerned, would turn out to be indeed a myth. But then—who was this mysterious man at the Maze? He was passing out with a good day when Mr. Smith resumed.

"Have you any objection to tell me what gave rise to your suspicion that Salter was at Foxwood? Or in England at all?"

But the officer had tact; plenty of it; or he would not have done for his post; and he turned the question off without any definite answer. For the true originator of the report, he who had caused it to reach the ears of Great Scotland Yard, was Sir Karl Andinnian.

Very conscious of the fact was Karl himself. He raised his hat from his brow as he went home, to wipe away the fever-damp, gathered there. He remembered to have read somewhere of one of the tortures devised by inquisitionists in the barbarous days gone by. An unhappy prisoner would be shut in a spacious room; and, day by day, watched the walls contracting by some mysterious agency, and closing around him. It seemed to Karl that the walls of the world were closing around him now. Or, rather, round one who had become dearer to him in his dread position than himself—his most ill-fated brother.

At home or abroad there was not a single ray of light to illumine or cheer the gloom. Abroad lay apprehension; at home only unhappiness, an atmosphere of estrangement that seemed to have nothing homelike or true in it. Karl went in, expecting to see the pony-chaise waiting. He had been about to drive his wife out; but, alarmed by the report whispered to him by Hewitt, and unable to rest in tranquillity, he had gone forth to see about what it meant. But the chaise was not there. Mac-lean was at work on the lawn.

"Has Lady Andinnian gone?" he inquired, rather surprised—for Lucy had not learned to drive yet.

"My leddy is somewhere about the garden, I think, Sir Karl," was the gardener's answer. "She sent the chay away again."

He found his wife sitting in a retired walk, a book in her hand, apparently reading it. Lucy was fading. Her face, worn and thin, had that indescribable air of pitiful sadness in it that tells of some deep-seated, ever-present sorrow. Karl was all too conscious of it. He blamed her for her course of conduct; but he did not attempt to conceal from himself that the trouble had originated with him.

"I am very sorry to have kept you waiting, Lucy," he began. "I had to go to Smith's on a little matter of business. You have sent the chaise away."

"I sent it away. The pony was tired of waiting. I don't care to go out at all to-day."

She spoke in an indifferent, almost a contemptuous tone. We must not blame her. Her naturally sweet temper was being sorely tried: day by day her husband seemed to act so as to afford less promise of any reconciliation.

"I could not help it," was all he answered.

She glanced up at the weary accent. If ever a voice spoke of unresisted despair, his did then. Her resentment vanished: her sympathy was aroused.

"You look unusually ill," she said.

"I am ill," he replied. "So ill that I should be almost glad to die."

Lucy paused. Somehow she never liked these semi-explanations. They invariably imbued her with a sense of self-reproach, an idea that she was acting harshly.

"Do you mean ill because of our estrangement?"

"Yes, for one thing. That makes all other trouble so much worse for me that at times I find it rather difficult to put up with."

Lucy played with her book. She wished she knew where her true duty lay. Oh how gladly, but for that dreadful wrong ever being enacted upon herself, would she fall upon his arm and whisper out her beseeching prayer: "Take me to you again, Karl!"

"Should the estranged terms we are living on end in a total and visible separation, you will have the satisfaction of remembering in your after-life, Lucy, that you have behaved cruelly to me. I repeat it: cruelly."

"I do not wish to separate," murmured Lucy.

"The time may soon come when you will be called upon to decide, one way or the other; when there will be nothing left to wait for; when all will be known to the world as it is known to us."

"I cannot understand you," said Lucy.

"Let it pass," he answered, declining as usual to speak openly upon the dreaded subject; for, to him, every word so spoken seemed fraught

with danger. "You can guess what I mean, I daresay : and the less said the better."

"You seem always to blame me, Karl," she rejoined, her voice softening almost to tears.

"Your own heart should tell you that I have cause."

"It has been very hard for me to bear."

"Yes; no doubt. It has hurt your pride."

"And something besides my pride," rejoined Lucy, with a faint flush of resentment.

"What has the bearing and the pain for you been, in comparison with what I have had to bear and suffer?" he asked, with emotion. "I, at least, have not tried to make it worse for you, Lucy, though you have for me. In my judgment, we ought to have *shared* the burden; and so made it lighter, if possible, for one another."

Ay, sometimes she had thought that herself. But then her womanly sense of insult, her justifiable resentment would step in and scatter the thought to the winds. It was too bad of Karl to reflect on her "pride."

"Is it to last for ever?" she asked, after a pause.

"Heaven knows!" he answered. "Heaven knows that I have striven to do my best. I have committed no sin against you, Lucy, save that of having married you when—when I ought not. I have most bitterly expiated it."

He spoke like one from whom all hope in life has gone; his haggard and utterly spiritless face was bent downwards. Lucy, her love all in force, her conscience aroused, touched his hand.

"If I have been more harshly judging than I ought, Karl, I pray you and Heaven alike to forgive me."

He gave no answer: but he turned his hand upwards so that hers lay in it. Thus they sat for some time, saying nothing. A singing bird was perched on a tree in front of them; a light cloud passed over the face of the blue sky.

"But—you know, Karl," she began again in a half whisper, "it has not been right, or well, for—for those to have been at the Maze who have been there."

"I do know it. I have repeatedly told you I knew it. I would almost have given my life to get them out. It will not be long now; I fear, one way or the other, the climax I have been dreading seems to be approaching."

"What climax?"

"Discovery. Bringing with it disgrace and pain and shame. It is when I fear that, Lucy, that I feel most bitterly how wrong it was of me to marry. But I did not know all the complication; I never anticipated the evils that would ensue. You must forgive me, for I did it three-parts in ignorance."

He clasped her hand as he spoke. Her tears were gathering fast.

Karl rose to depart, but she kept his fingers in hers, her tears dropping as she looked up at him.

"I ask, Karl, if we are to live this kind of life for ever?"

"As you shall will, Lucy. The life is of your choosing, not of mine."

One long look of doubt, of compassion, of love, into each other's eyes; and then the hand-clasp that so thrilled through each of them was loosed; the fingers fell apart. Karl went off to the house, and Lucy burst into a storm of sobs so violent as to startle the little bird, and stop its song.

CHAPTER XXXV.

TAKEN FROM THE EVIL TO COME.

DREADFUL commotion at Mrs. Jinks's. Young ladies coming in, all in excitement; the widow nearly off her head. Their pastor was ill.

On a sofa before his parlour fire, he lay extended, the Reverend Guy; his head on a soft pillow, his feet (in embroidered slippers) on an embroidered cushion. The room was quite an epitome of sacred decorations: crosses lay embedded amid ferns; illuminated scrolls adorned the walls. Something was wrong with the reverend gentleman's throat: his hands and brow were feverish. Whether it was merely a relaxed throat, or a common soreness, or a quinsy threatening him, could not be decided in the general dismay. Some thought one way, some another; all agreed in one thing—that it must be treated promptly. The dear man was passive as any lamb in their ministering hands, and submitted accordingly. What rendered the case more distressing and its need of recovering treatment all urgent, was the fact that the morrow would be some great day in the calendar, necessitating high services at St. Jerome's. How were they to be held when the chief priest was disabled? Damon Puff was all very well; but he was not the Reverend Guy Cattacomb.

The Widow Jinks, assuming most experience by reason of years, and also in possessing a cousin who was a nurse of renown, as good as any doctor on an emergency, had recommended the application of "plant" leaves. The ladies seized upon it eagerly: anything to allay the beloved patient's sufferings and stop the progress of the disorder. The leaves had been procured without loss of time; Lawyer St. Henry's kitchen-garden over the way having had the honour of supplying them; and they were now in process of preparation in the ladies' fair hands. Two were picking, three boiling and bruising, four sewing, all inwardly intending to apply them. The Widow Jinks had her hands full below: gruel, broth, jelly, arrowroot, beef-tea, custard-puddings, and other things, being alike in the course of preparation over the kitchen-fire: the superabundant amount of sick dainties arising from the fact that each lady had ordered that which seemed to her best. What with the

care of so many saucepans at once, and the being called off perpetually to answer the knocks at the front door, the widow felt rather wild ; and sincerely wished all sore throats at Jericho. For the distressing news had spread ; and St. Jerome's fair worshippers were coming up to the house in uninterrupted succession.

It fell to Miss Blake to apply the cataplasm. As many assisting, by dint of gingerly touching the tip of the reverend gentleman's ears or holding back his shirt-collar, as could get their fingers in. Miss Blake, her heart attuned to sympathy, felt stirred by no common compassion. She was sure the patient's eyes sought hers : and, forgetting the few years' difference in their ages, all kinds of flattering ideas and sweet hopes floated into her mind ; for it was by no means incumbent on her to waste her charms in wearing the willow for that false regenade—false in more ways than one—Karl Andinnian. Looking on passively, but not tendering her own help amid so many volunteers, sat Jemima Moore in a distant chair, her face betokening anything but pleasurable ease. There were times when she felt jealous of Miss Blake.

The leaves applied, the throat bound up, and some nourishment administered in the shape of a dish of broth, nothing remained to be essayed, save that the patient should endeavour to get some sleep. To enable him to do this, it was obvious, even to the anxious nurses themselves, that he should be left alone. Miss Blake suggested that they should all make a pilgrimage to St. Jerome's to pray for him. Eagerly was it seized upon, and bonnets were tied on. A thought crossed each mind almost in unison—that one at least might have been left behind to watch the slumbers : but as nobody would help another to the office, and did not like very well to propose herself, it remained unsoken.

"You'll come back again !" cried the reverend sufferer, retaining Miss Blake's hand in his, as she was wishing him good-bye.

"*Rely* upon me, dear Mr. Cattacomb," was the response. And Miss Blake regarded the promise as sacred, and would not have broken it for untold gold.

So they trooped out : and Mr. Cattacomb, left to himself and to quiet, speedily fell into the desired sleep. He was really feeling ill and feverish.

The time was drawing on for the late afternoon service, and Tom Pepp stood tinkling the bell as the pilgrims approached. Simultaneously with their arrival, there drove up an omnibus, closely packed with devotees from Basham, under the convoy of Mr. Puff. That reverend junior, his parted hair and moustache and lisp in perfect order, conducted the service to the best of his ability ; and the fore-heads of some of his fair hearers touched the ground in humility, when they put up their prayers for the sick pastor.

The autumn days were short now ; the service had been somewhat

long, and when St. Jerome's turned out its flock, evening had set in. You could hardly see your hand before you. Some went one way, some another. The omnibus started back with its freight: Mr. Puff, however (to the utter mental collapse of those inside it), joined the pilgrims on their return to Mr. Cattacomb's. Miss Blake went straight on to Foxwood Court: for, mindful of her promise to the patient, she wished to tell Lady Andinnian that she should not be in to dinner.

Margaret Sumnor was staying with Lucy: her invalid sofa and herself having been transported to the Court. The rector and his wife had been invited to an informal dinner that evening; also Mr. Moore and his sister: so Miss Blake thought it better to give notice that she should be absent, that they might not wait for her. Jemima Moore, a very good-natured girl on the whole, offered to accompany her, seeing that nobody else did; for they all trooped off in the clerical wake of Mr. Puff. As the two ladies left the Court again, they became aware that some kind of commotion was taking place before the Maze gate. It was too dark to see so far, but there was much howling and groaning.

"Do let us go and see what it is!" cried Miss Jemima. And she ran off without further parley. The irruption into the Maze of Mr. Detective Tatton—who was by this time known in his real name and character—had excited much astonishment and speculation in Foxwood; the more especially as no two opinions agreed as to what there was within the Maze that he could be after. The prevailing belief amid the juvenile population was that a menagerie of wild beasts had taken up its illegitimate abode inside. They collected at hours in choice groups around the gate, pressing their noses against the iron-work in the hope of getting a peep at the animals, or at least of hearing them roar. On this evening a dozen or two had come down as usual: and Tom Pepp, having cut short the ringing out, in his ardour to make one, had omitted to put off the conical cap.

But these proceedings did not please Sir Karl Andinnian's agent at Clematis Cottage. That gentleman, after having warned them sundry times to keep away, and enlarged on the perils that indiscriminate curiosity generally brought to its indulgers, had crossed the road to-night, armed with a long gig-whip, which he began to lay about him kindly. The small fry, yelling and shrieking, dispersed immediately.

"Little simpletons!" cried Miss Jemima Moore, as the agent walked back with his whip, after explaining to her. "Papa says the police only went in to take the boundaries of the parish. And—oh! there's Tom Pepp in his sacred cap! Miss Blake, look at Tom Pepp. Oh! Oh, if Mr. Cattacomb could but see him!"

Miss Blake, who never did things in a hurry, walked leisurely after the offending boy, intending to pounce upon him at St. Jerome's. In that self-same moment the Maze gate was thrown open, and Mrs.

Grey, her golden hair disordered, herself in evident tribulation, came forth wringing her hands; amazing Miss Jemima more considerably than even the whip had amazed the boys.

What she said, Jemima hardly caught. It was to the effect that her baby was in convulsions; that she wanted Mr. Moore on the instant, and had no one to send.

"I'll run for papa," cried the good-natured girl. "I will run at once; I am his daughter. But you should get it into a warm bath instantly, you know. There's nothing else does for convulsions. I would come and help you if there were any one else to go for papa."

In answer to this kind suggestion, Mrs. Grey stepped inside again and shut the gate in Miss Jemima's face. But she thanked her in a few heartfelt words, and begged her to get Mr. Moore there without delay: her servant was already preparing a bath for the baby.

Jemima ran at the top of her speed, and met her father and aunt walking to Foxwood Court. The doctor hastened to the Maze, leaving his sister to explain the cause of his absence to Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian.

Dinner was nearly over at the Court when the doctor at length got there. The baby was better, he said: but he was by no means sure that it would not have a second attack. If so, he thought it could not live: it was but weakly at the best.

As may readily be imagined, scarcely any other topic formed the conversation at the dinner-table. Not one of the guests seated round it had the slightest notion that it was, of all others, the most intensely unwelcome to their host and hostess: the one in his dread to hear the Maze alluded to at all; the other in her bitter pain and jealousy. The doctor enlarged upon the isolated position of Mrs. Grey, upon her sweetness and beauty, upon her warm love for her child, and her great distress. Sir Karl made an answering remark, when obliged. Lucy sat in silence, bearing her cross. Every word seemed to be an outrage on her feelings. The guests talked on; but somehow each felt that the harmony of the meeting had left it.

Making his dinner off one dish, in spite of the remonstrances of Sir Karl and the attentions of Mr. Giles and his fellows, the doctor drank a cup of coffee, and rose to leave again. His sister, begging Lady Andinnian to excuse her, put on her hat and shawl, and left with him.

"Are you going over to the Maze, William?" she asked, when they got out.

"I am, Diana."

"Then I will go with you. That's why I came away. The poor young thing is alone, save for her servants, and I think it only a charity that some one should be with her."

The surgeon gave a grin of satisfaction in the darkness of the night. "Take care, Diana," said he, with assumed gravity. "You know the

question the holy ones at St. Jerome's are raising—whether that lovely lady is any better than she should be."

"Bother to St. Jerome's," independently returned Miss Diana. "If the holy ones, as you call them, would expend a little more time in cultivating St. Paul's enjoined charity, and a little less in praying with those two parsons of theirs, Heaven might be better served. Let the lady be what she will, she is to be pitied in her distress, and I am going to her. Brother William!"

"Well?"

"I cannot think what is the matter with Lady Andinnian. She looks just like one that's pining away."

The evening went on at the Court. Miss Blake came back, bringing the news that the Reverend Mr. Cattacomb's throat was easier: which was of course a priceless consolation. At ten o'clock Mr. and Mrs. Sumnor took their departure, Sir Karl walking with them as far as the lodge. In returning, he saw his wife at one of the flower-beds.

"Lucy! Is it you, out in the damp? What do you want?"

"I am getting one of the late roses for Margaret," was the answer. "She likes to have a flower to cheer her when she lies awake at night. She says it makes her think of Heaven."

"I will get it for you," said Karl. And he chose the best he could in the starlight, and cut it.

"Lucy, I am going over the way," he resumed in a low tone, as they turned to the steps, "and I cannot tell you when I shall be back."

Of all audacious avowals, this sounded about the coolest to its poor young listener. Her quickened breath seemed to choke her; her heart beat as though it would burst its bounds.

"Why need you tell me of it?" she passionately answered, all her strivings for patience giving way before the moment's angry pain.

Karl sighed. "It lies in my duty to do what I can, Lucy: as I should have thought you might see and recognize. Should the child have a relapse in the course of the night, I shall be there to fetch Moore: there's no one else to go."

Lucy let fall the train of her dinner dress, and swept across the hall; vouchsafing back to him neither look nor word.

The chamber lay in semi-light: with that still hush, pervading it, common to rooms where death is being waited for, and is seen visibly approaching. Mr. Moore's fears had been verified. The infant at the Maze had had a second attack of convulsions, and was dying.

It lay folded in a blanket on its mother's lap. The peaceful little face was at rest now; the soft breathing, getting slower and slower, alone stirring it. Miss Diana, her hat thrown off, sat on her heels on the hearth-rug, speaking every now and then a word or two of homely comfort: the doctor stood near the fire, looking on.

With her golden hair all pushed from her brow, and her pretty face, so delicate and wan, bent downwards, she sat, the poor mother. Save for the piteous sorrow in the despairing eyes, and a deep sobbing sigh that would arise in the throat, no sign of emotion escaped her. The doctor, who saw the end getting nearer and nearer, and was aware that such ends are sometimes painful to see, even in an infant—the little frame struggling with the fleeting breath, the helpless hands fighting for it—had been anxious that Mrs. Grey should resign her charge to some one else. Miss Diana made one more effort to bring it about.

"My dear, I know you *must* be tired. You'll get the cramp. Let me take it, if only for a minute's relief."

"Do, Mrs. Grey," said the doctor.

She looked up at them with beseeching entreaty. "Please don't ask me, I must have him to the last. He is going from me for ever."

"Not for ever, my dear," corrected Miss Diana. "You will go to him, though he will not return to you."

The door opened, and some one came in. Absorbed by the dying child though she was, and by the surroundings it brought, Mrs. Grey glanced quickly up and made a frantic movement to motion the intruder back, her face changing to dread, her lips parting with fear. She thought it might be one who must not dare to show himself if he valued life and liberty: but it was only Karl Andinnian.

"Oh, Karl, he is dying!" she cried, in the hasty impulse of the moment—and the dry eyes filled with tears. "My darling baby is dying."

"I have been so sorry to hear about it, Mrs. Grey," returned Karl, who had his wits about him, if she had not, and who saw the surprise of the doctor and Miss Diana, at the familiarity of the address. "I came over to see if I could be of any use to you."

He fell to talking to Mr. Moore in an undertone, giving her time to recover her mistake; and the hushed silence fell on the chamber again. Karl bent to look at the pale little face, soon to put on immortality; he laid his hand lightly on the damp forehead, keeping it there for a minute in solemn silence, as though breathing an inward prayer.

"He will be better off There than here," whispered he then to the mother, in turning to leave the chamber. "The world is full of thorns and care, as some of us too well know: God is taking him from it."

Pacing a distant room like a caged lion, was Sir Adam Andinnian. He wheeled round on his heel when his brother entered.

"Was ever position like unto mine, Karl?" he broke out; anger, pain, impatience, and most deep emotion mingling together in his tone. "Here am I, condemned to hide myself within these four walls, and may not quit them even to see my child die! The blackest criminal on earth can call for his friends on his death-bed. When are that offensive doctor and his sister going?"

"They are staying with Rose," spoke Karl, in his quiet voice. "Oh, Adam, I am so sorry for this! I feel it with my whole heart."

"Don't talk," said Adam, rather roughly. "No fate was ever like my fate. Heaven has mercy for others: none for me. Because my own bitter punishment was not enough, it must even take my son!"

"It does seem to you cruel. But God's ways are not as our ways. He is no doubt taking him, in love, from the evil to come. When we get up there ourselves, Adam, we shall see the reason of it."

Sir Adam did not answer. He sat down and covered his face with his hand, and remained in silence. Karl did not break it.

Sounds by and by. The doctor and his sister were departing, escorted by Ann Hopley—who must see them out at the gate and make it fast again. When the bolts and bars were shot, Adam went forth.

In its own crib lay the baby then, straight and still. The fluttering heart had ceased to beat; the sweet little peaceful face was at rest. Rose knelt by her own bed, her head muffled in the counterpane. Sir Adam strode up to his child and stood looking at it.

A minute's silence, deep as that of the death that was before him, and then a dreadful burst of tears. They are always dreadful when a man sheds them in his agony.

"It was all we had, Karl," he said between his sobs. "And I did not even see him die!"

Karl took the strong but now passive hands in his. His own eyes were wet as he strove to say a word of comfort to his brother. But these first moments of grief are not best calculated for it.

"He is happier than he could ever have been here, Adam. Try and realize it. He is already one of God's bright angels."

And my young Lady Andinnian, over at Foxwood Court, did not choose to go to bed, but sat up to indulge her defiant humour. Never had her spirit been so near open rebellion as it was that night. Sir Karl did not come in: apparently he meant to take up his abode at the Maze until morning.

"Of course he must be there when his child is dying!" spoke she to herself, as she paced the carpet with a step as impatient and a great deal more indignant than those other steps that had paced that night. "Of course *she* must be comforted! While I——"

The words were choked by a flood of emotion. Bitter reflections crowded on her, one upon another. The more earnestly and patiently she strove to bear and *forbear*, the more cruelly seemed to rise up her afflictions. And Lucy Andinnian threw herself down in abandonment, wondering whether all pity had quite gone out of Heaven.

(To be concluded.)

PAPER AND ITS SUBSTITUTES.

WHEN it first became necessary to express ideas, promulgate laws, or certify contracts in writing, some natural substance, needing no manufacture and but little preparation, would be chosen. The bare surface of a rock ; a flat stone ; clay, afterwards dried in the sun, like the Babylonian bricks, sufficed for the requirements of rulers and priests—the only classes whose deeds or thoughts were then considered worthy of record.

But, as the intercourse of man with his fellow-men increased, as traffic became more general, and something like enlightenment irradiated from the original centre, greater facility of communication or means of remembrance became essential. Tablets, therefore, composed of slight pieces of board covered with wax, or some other soft substance easily impressed by the stylus, were used for memoranda, while plates of metal, ivory, or wood were inscribed with the edicts, or whatever writing was to serve other than a temporary purpose.

Long before the relinquishment of these inconvenient and cumbrous materials, however, paper, so called from the papyrus of which it was first made, came into use. We have no possibility of ascertaining the origin of this primitive paper, nor will this surprise us when we consider that a writing on papyrus has been discovered dating back as far as the last two reigns of the third dynasty of Manetho's Pharaohs, the immediate predecessors of Cheops, the builder of the first and greatest pyramid, thus fixing the era at two thousand years before the time of Moses.

This plant, the *cyperus papyrus*, grows on the marshy banks of rivers in Abyssinia and Syria ; it is also found to some extent in Sicily ; but in ancient times it abounded on the shores of the Nile. It is of the same order as the bulrush, but of much larger growth. The stem is triangular, surrounded by long grassy leaves that spring from near the ground. The flowers form flattened spikes from fifteen to twenty inches in length, garnished with long, silky fibres. These flowers were much used in Egypt to form garlands for crowning the statues of the gods.

"Paper is made from the papyrus," says Pliny, "by splitting it with a needle into very thin leaves, due care being taken that they should be as broad as possible." The sheets of papyrus pith are laid upon a table, and moistened with Nile water, "lengthwise, as long as the papyrus will admit of, the jagged edges being cut off either end ; after which, a cross layer is placed over it, the same way ; in fact, that hurdles

are made. When this is done, the leaves are pressed close together, and then dried in the sun ; after which they are united to one another."

The great manufactory and mart for this ancient paper was Alexandria, and during the first few centuries of the Christian era it formed an important article of commerce. Writings on papyrus exist belonging to the fifth and sixth centuries, and there is evidence of its having been used as late as the seventh. Indeed, it does not appear to have been wholly given up till the time of Charlemagne. The *cyperus papyrus* has now disappeared from Egypt, making good the words of Isaiah, "The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more seen."

The great expense of papyrus, on account of the monopoly, and the deficient supply, drove the people to other contrivances, and paper made of the inner bark of trees became not uncommon ; hence *liber*, a book. Prepared skins of animals also came into use. The employment of skins for writing material is very ancient ; but when Ptolemy Epiphanius, out of jealousy, forbade the exportation of papyrus, the fabrication of parchment received a new impulse.

It would seem that the preparation of the skin for the purposes of the scribe rendered it costly ; for even in the eleventh century we are told by Hildebert, Archbishop of Tours, that the writer had to remove from his parchment, with the aid of a razor, the remains of fat and other impurities, and then with pumice-stone to make the hair and tendons disappear ; thus giving us to understand that the transcriber had, in a great measure, to prepare his own material.

The first invention of paper manufactured from vegetable pulp is also lost in the mists of antiquity. It appears to have been first introduced into Europe from the East through the Arabians and Persians. The use of paper, according to the modern application of the word, had become common in China at an extremely remote period, and Gibbon tells us, in a note, that this manufacture was introduced from China into Samarcand 651 B.C., and thence spread over Europe.

The Chinese are said to have so great a variety of paper that each province possesses its own peculiar make. The sort commonly known as silk-paper is fabricated from the inner bark of the bamboo or mulberry tree. The rice-paper—so called—is prepared from the inner portion of the stems of a hardy leguminous plant that grows plentifully about the lakes near Calcutta, and also in the Island of Formosa, whence the Chinese import it in quantities. The stems of the plant being cut into the proper lengths for the sheets, the pith is cut spirally into a thin slice, then flattened, pressed, and dried.

The Arabians appear first to have introduced the manufacture of paper into Spain. On the oldest specimen extant of this Spanish manufacture a treaty of peace between the King of Aragon and a neighbouring potentate, A.D. 1175, is transcribed. A manuscript exists in

England, however, written upon cotton paper, bearing date A.D. 1049; but this paper was, no doubt, imported from the East.

Paper at this early period was of exceedingly inferior quality, being coarse, brown, spongy, and liable to speedy decay. So much was this the case that in A.D. 1221 the Emperor Frederic the Second of Germany issued an order declaring null and void all documents written on this material, and fixing a term of two years within which they were to be transferred to parchment.

Paper had hitherto been manufactured of raw cotton, hemp, or other vegetable fibre; but it now came to light that fibre having already undergone the process, not only of manufacture but of wear, was better adapted to the purpose, being more easily reducible to a fine pulp. We have, therefore, specimens of paper made from rags as early as the fourteenth century, the oldest extant being a letter from Joinville to Louis the Tenth of France, dated A.D. 1315.

The continued imperfection of this manufacture still necessitated the transcription of all important documents on parchment or vellum. The parchment was, as of old, cut into bands joined endwise, so as to form rolls, some of the judicial acts requiring rolls twenty feet in length. Nor was this plan discontinued till the sixteenth century, when the *codex*, written on both sides, became general. It must not be concluded that ancient law parchments were always lengthy affairs, however; there being contracts of sales, dating A.D. 1233 and 1252 only two inches long by five wide, and a will, written in A.D. 1255, two inches by three and a half.

The principle of paper-making has been the same from time immemorial, the only change being the material used, and the machinery employed. The fibrous substance is cut and bruised in water until it becomes a fine, soft pulp. This is taken up in a thin even layer, upon a frame of fine wire cloth that allows the moisture to pass through, when the pulp speedily coagulates into a sheet of paper. The sheets are first pressed between felt, which being removed the paper is again subjected to a powerful pressure and dried. It is in this state bibulous, like blotting-paper; but the sheets are now dipped in size, and again pressed and dried. For printing-paper, however, the size is added to the pulp in the engine.

Some idea may be formed of the improvement effected by machinery in this manufacture when it is stated that whereas by the hand process the paper took more than three months to complete, the rags may now be put into the mill one day, and the paper be ready for delivery the next.

Scarcely a fibrous vegetable substance exists that may not be turned to use in this manufacture. Jacob Christian Schaffer, of Ratisbon, in 1765, wrote a work on experiments in making paper from other materials than rags, which is printed on sixty varieties of paper, made from

as many different substances. And in 1786 the Marquis de Vilette published in London a small book printed on paper made of marsh-mallow; at the end are leaves of paper manufactured at Bruges from twenty different plants, such as nettles, hops, reeds, &c. But these, as well as straw, can only be considered as substitutes to supply the deficiency of rags, not as in any way superseding that material.

In 1390 Ulman Strömer established a large paper-mill at Nuremberg; this mill is said to have been the first in Europe to convert rags into paper. The French soon followed this example, however, and so far improved upon the manufacture that for a long period they acquired almost a monopoly of the trade, importing largely to other countries. Another hundred years elapsed before the first English paper-mill was erected at Hertford, a second being put up at Dartford, in 1580, by a German of the name of Spielman, who received knighthood from Queen Elizabeth.

The production of these mills must still have been inferior to those of the French, however, as we are told that the Protestant refugees flocking to England after the revocation of the edict of Nantes greatly improved the manufacture of white writing-paper.

The qualities of the paper produced in different countries are compared by Fuller, in 1661, to those of the various manufacturers, the French being "light, slight, and slender; the Venetian, neat, subtil, and court-like; and the Dutch, thick, corpulent, and gross, sucking up the ink with the sponginess thereof."

In 1471 the printers Sweynham and Paunartz petitioned the Pope for assistance, on the plea that the number of books they had printed and which remained on their hands was so great, that it was a wonder where they could have procured a sufficient quantity of paper for the 12,475 volumes.

Just two hundred and fifty years later the quantity of paper made in Great Britain amounted to 300,000 reams—about equal to two-thirds of the consumption.

Passing over another hundred and fifty years, we find the German Zollverein consuming over 180,000 cwts. of rags annually in paper manufacture, and employing 794 paper-mills, producing annually 36,964 tons of paper.

In the year previous to the repeal of the duty upon paper the excise amounted to £1,244,142 in Great Britain and Ireland. Since that time there are no direct means of ascertaining the quantity manufactured; but when we find that one of the smaller newspapers consumes two tons of paper daily, that last year 90,453 tons of paper-making material was imported, and that the value of printed books exported rose from £390,584 in 1858 to £684,243 in 1870, some idea may be formed of the immense increase in the consumption of this simple but invaluable article.

“PAROLE D'HONNEUR.”

TWO women were under a scarlet-berried rowan tree, talking together in feminine fashion, as the sun dipped down behind the hill on which they had spent their idle evening hours among the yellow gorse and purple heath. Two women: not so very wide apart in age; the one looking down, the other up; both pairs of eyes meeting as the one stood upright and the other sat beneath the tree. And yet, nearly of an age as they were, surely there were never two women more distinctly unlike each other in characteristics; more completely unlike each other in life and mind and bearing. The one who stood and looked down at her smaller companion was plainly the elder, plainly the wiser, plainly the more worldly. One saw it in her stylish, tall figure, in her fair *distingué* face, in her ease of manner, in her clear blue eye. The other was only a girl, after all—a little creature with a sweet young face and antelope eyes, and pretty arched brown brows, oddly capable of expressing her every thought—oddly thoughtful just now, as she played, a trifle nervously, with the bit of purple heath she held in one slight hand.

“Things were going on in the old way when he came,” she was saying. “You know the old way, Belle—the horrible, dragging old way; mamma growing harder to bear with every day and wearing poor papa’s life out with her cruel speeches; and Jack getting more dissipated and selfish and contemptible; and no corner in the house that was like home. That was the way it all was when he came, and—well, somehow, he was so kind to papa, and so generous, and so anxious to please that no one could help liking him a little; and then he asked me to marry him, at last, and I said yes. I thought, Belle, that if I had a house of my very own, I could make it seem like home to poor, heart-broken papa; and—I did not dislike him, either.” And the girl ended with a ghost of a sigh.

Lady Lundie looked down at her. What a nice, insignificant little creature she was, with her pretty, small frame, and her sweet face, and the wide, cool brown eyes under the soft shadow of her plain little straw hat. Lady Lundie had never looked out on the purple heath with such honest eyes as these, even years back, and yet somehow she quite understood her young friend, and had a whimsical sort of pity for her.

“And you were to have been married—when?” she asked.

“In April, I believe: but you know I was taken ill of slow fever soon after we were engaged; and when you sent for me to come to Loch Ransa, Mr. Lauder said he would give me up for a month or so,

if it would please me. It was very good of him," in a quiet sounding way. "And papa said it would do me good, so I came."

"A sort of parole d'honneur," suggested her ladyship, carelessly. "Was that it, Joanna?"

Joanna's brown eyebrows took their puzzled line for a second, and then dropped, as she laughed a little.

"I don't know," she said; "I suppose so, though. It does look like it. But I couldn't break my word—parole d'honneur, or not—and I gave my word before he gave me my parole; and one word is as good as half a dozen."

"In your honest category, yes," her friend answered, and then checked an uncalled-for sigh. She remembered an episode in her own life when a thousand words had not been worth one—when a thousand vows had been valued at less than one simple promise. But that was years ago, before she became Lady Lundie; and it was because she had determined to be Lady Lundie that all the old vows had been blown so lightly before the mind of her worldliness. Joanna knew all about it; and so Joanna understood what her scarcely checked sigh meant.

There was a slight pause after this, in which both looked at the roseate glow the setting sun cast over the hills and the heath and the loch below. They both had their own secret thoughts, and each was following one fancy into a different channel. Lady Lundie was looking backward; Joanna Forsythe, forward. They were so unlike, you see, and yet they were fond of each other, for all that.

"Look," said Lady Lundie, at last, "the sun is slipping behind the heath, Joanna. We had better go home; tea will be ready, and Dugald will be tired of waiting for us."

Joanna rose obediently. She was prone to be led by people whom she liked, and she always obeyed her friend. She had obeyed her to some extent when they were girls together, when Lady Lundie had only been a fair, tall, handsome creature, in fashion in their small, commonplace world; as she was now in the greater one, since she had won a higher fortune by her marriage. Her fortune had always been a better one than Joanna's, for some reason or other. But then Joanna's fortune was a very unpleasant one, at best. Her father was almost a poor man; her mother was an utterly shrewish, utterly selfish, and utterly calculating woman—such a woman as one seldom meets—thank Heaven! Her only brother, who was his mother's favourite, was dissipated, overbearing, and extravagant; so, between the two, this quiet, yet intensely feeling, straight-forward little Joanna and her careworn father, lived in an atmosphere of petty meanness and big deceits, which in itself was a daily torture. No wonder that Mr. Lauder's offer, coming, as it did, from that honest, gentlemanly young man of business, was received after Joanna's grave, conscientious, ungirlish fashion, and pondered over and

talked about between father and daughter, and finally accepted. Joanna had never loved any one else ; she was fond of Mr. Lauder in a gentle, undemonstrative way, and her home would be a haven of rest for her father and herself ; so, why not say yes ? The yes was said, and the marriage day almost fixed upon, when the tractable young betrothed fell ill ; and soon after, on receiving her old friend's invitation to Loch Ransa, was sent to recruit herself among the bracken on *parole d'honneur*, for she was to become Mrs. Lauder in October.

As Lady Lundie had prophesied would be the case, tea was ready when they arrived, and Dugald was tired of waiting. Dugald was Lady Lundie's brother, and was spending his summer at Loch Ransa, too ; though he could not have told why, unless it was that the place was pretty and picturesque, and he was idle and rather fond of his handsome, clever sister.

He was lounging in a low chair before one of the big French windows when they came in ; and he turned round to look at Joanna's small straw hat, and the face under it, with a touch of admiration in his eyes.

"What," he said, "more ferns and heath, Joanna ? What are you going to do with them all ? Do you feed your horses on ferns, Belle ? and is it possible that you take those fearfully energetic walks for economy's sake ?"

Joanna came to his window and stood near him, pulling off her gloves, but not looking at him, even as she made her answer ; looking out at the poplars shivering in the evening breeze from the loch.

"I am afraid it is not quite right to carry so many of them away, when I have no real use for them. They are mine, Mr. Dugald, not Belle's," she said. "I suppose they are happier on the hill-side with the wind blowing over them at night and the bees droning by them in the daytime ; but I love them so much that when I see a fern that looks prettier than the last one I gathered, or a bit of heath that looks a brighter purple, I have it in my hand almost before I know—and every one of them looks prettier and more purple. That's it, you see."

His face clouded slightly as he got up and leaned against the window, making a pretence of playing with a bit of fern she had laid upon the table behind them. He really looked just at that minute like a man with a grievance.

"I wish you were as tender of other things as you are of leaves and flowers, Joanna," he said, in a low tone ; not so low, however, but that Lady Lundie caught his words. "Or I wish that I cared less for what you are so ready to lavish on broom and ferns."

Joanna said nothing. The breeze from the loch was blowing up fresh and steady, making the leaves of the young poplars rustle almost mournfully ; the sun had dropped out of sight, and the purple hills stood revealed in soft, clear outline against the saffron sky. It was

this she was looking at, not at the man who had just spoken to her. She might scarcely have heard him : and yet, despite her seeming indifference, there was a curious, intense inner shadow in the depths of her eyes.

"Dugald does not understand you, Joanna," Lady Lundie said to her an hour or two later, as they sat alone together. "And yet I know you do not dislike him. Why is it that you are not quite good friends?"

She knew well enough what the reason of it was, but she chose to ask the question just for the mere sake of asking it. She wanted to hear what Joanna would say. But Joanna answered her simply enough, as she was apt to answer questions that would have embarrassed most girls.

"I couldn't tell you, if I would, Belle," she said. "And I do not think I would if I could."

"Does that mean that the reason is uncomplimentary to Dugald?" asked her friend.

Joanna shook her head.

Lady Lundie laughed a trifle sarcastically. "Joanna," she said, "does it mean Mr. Lauder?"

Whereupon Joanna was silent. It was one of her self-contained peculiarities to assert her right to be silent when she chose.

But she was never curt, or even cold, in her manner towards her fellow visitor. She was always willing to talk to him, and ready to listen when he tried to interest her. They had passed some very pleasant hours during the month they had spent together at Loch Ransa. There had been long afternoons in which they had all drifted here and there over the water, just as fancy took them, Dugald Barholm at the oars, Belle at one end of the boat on a pile of shawls, and Joanna at the tiller, her quiet eyes alight, her white cheeks touched with pink, and her long, abundant hair of seaweed-brown all blown about her figure by the wind. Barholm's chief occupation at such times had generally been to neglect his oars and look at the girl ; at her slight, simply attired figure, her delicate, intense face, her big, odd, steadfast eyes, which somehow reminded him of the eyes of a deer. She was something better than handsome—she was picturesque ; and from admiring her gentle, self-contained way, he crept on to something else more dangerous. Her low, clear, dropping voice had a novel peculiarity of its own ; her very movements were peculiar to herself, and apt to impress themselves upon his memory. Belle was a thoroughbred beauty, and had been one all her life ; but Joanna—well, Joanna was simply Joanna, and might have belonged to a distinct and separate race ; and yet she was only a girl of twenty-one years, and utterly devoid of all girlish coquetry.

Apart from these luxurious, sunny afternoons, there had been long

evenings, too, in which they had sat together in the moonlit window, Joanna, perhaps, a trifle weary, as she often was after their rambles, and in consequence leaning back in a deep, cushioned chair, with a soft, fair light falling upon her white dress, and white face, and long hair. She had a girlish fashion of wearing her hair loose, and its brown beauty and wonderful abundance won Barholm's intense admiration. It was soft hair, thick and fine, and crumpled into big waves ; and as they sat talking in the moonlight, the man was often filled with a foolish, tender longing to touch one of the great tresses that slipped down her small white throat and over her shoulder, and on to the white dress. But the very characteristics which had charmed him defended her against him. He could have helped himself against Belle if it had been she whom fate had placed in the empty niche in his heart, but he could not help himself against Joanna Forsythe. Perhaps if he had known the whole truth he would not have steadied himself against his frequent disappointments as he did ; but he did not comprehend it fully.

It was somewhat singular that, though Lady Lundie had never cared to conceal anything from her friend, she rarely received any confidences in return. Joanna was innately silent about herself ; she had always been disposed to self-ignoring rather than self-veiling, and so, until the afternoon under the rowan tree on the hill-side, she had never openly explained her position. There was a lover, her friend knew, but whether a successful one or not she could not have told until that day, and then it was only the merest chance that had led to the simple revelation of facts. After this manner matters stood when Joanna had been a month at Loch Ransa upon her parole d'honneur.

Only a week after this revelation of facts had been made, Barholm was sauntering up and down smoking on the stone terrace before the low windows of his sister's morning room, when Joanna received her letters, and among the rest he noticed a thick, square, white envelope, stamped with a scarlet monogram, and exceedingly well filled withal. He took another turn after seeing all this in one hurried glance, and then came back again, and when he did so he found Joanna leaning against her chair's back, holding this very envelope in her hand and looking at it, not having opened it yet. Something in her face struck him with a sudden consciousness of pain. He took another turn, and came back once more. She had opened the letter by that time and was reading it, and he felt almost sure that she was forcing herself to the task. When he had sauntered off again and returned, he saw that she was gone, and that the scarlet monogrammed envelope lay upon the carpet empty. She had taken the letter with her.

It was not until luncheon that he saw her again, and then she came down from her room looking pale and worn, and actually shivering a little. She had by no means wholly recovered from her illness, and was easily tired or chilled even in these soft summer days.

"You must have caught cold," commented Lady Lundie, anxiously. But she shook her head—a gesture which was a quiet, pretty habit of hers.

"No," she said. "It will be over soon. Don't mind me, Belle."

Dugald Barholm went to the sofa for a gorgeous wonder of a shawl lying there; and bringing it to her, stood behind her chair and folded it around her.

He had almost a woman's gentleness of touch and manner, and such a trifle as this in his hands became a silent act of tender homage.

She turned her face over her shoulder—her rare, pale young face—and looked up, and for a breath's space her soft eyes rested on his with a new shadow of something speechful in their depths.

"Thank you!" she said. And even years after these days were lost for ever, and he was almost an alien from his native land, Dugald Barholm never forgot those two simple words.

Just for that one second she was nearer to him than she had ever been before; but it was only for that one second. He felt that they were even farther apart than usual after it had passed. Her customary brightness of mood seemed to flag, she was silent and pale all day, and no effort of theirs could rouse her from her odd apathy.

It was not until the next day that she was quite herself again; then she was almost restless. She had made up her mind to take another ramble, and wanted Belle to accompany her in a pilgrimage to the top of a purple hill which was a great favourite of hers.

Barholm came into the breakfast-room just as she was talking to Lady Lundie about it, and the two were standing together, Joanna looking wonderfully small and light in contrast with her friend's tall figure. She was quite close to her, and when Dugald came in she had both hands clasped on Belle's shoulder, and was saying in a soft, absent voice: "Let us go, Belle; I have looked at that hill so long from here that I cannot wait any longer. I want to see as much of Loch Ransa as I can while I am here. And we may not be together much more, Belle."

That folding of her hands upon Lady Lundie's shoulder was a habit with her. She always did it when she had any appeal to make or when she had anything particular to say. She was not a demonstrative girl, but she had a dozen such habits—grave, sweet and peculiar.

Lady Lundie turned slightly to look at her half uplifted face—half uplifted because her chin was resting on her clasped hands, though her eyes were roaming far away towards the purple hill that was the object of her admiration.

"What does that mean, Joanna?" she asked. "We are not going to lose you, are we?"

"I don't know—" she answered, her words dropping slowly, as if she

was thinking. "I can't tell—it might be—but I hope it won't be—yet."

They climbed the purple hill-side that morning, in accordance with her wish, and Dugald Barholm went with them. He was a trifle indolent by nature, but he would have faced a much harder task than rambling over a mile or so of heather, for the sake of being near her. The simple sight of her slight grey-clad figure loitering along the zigzag path, sometimes before them, sometimes near them, was quite enough for him. There was an exquisite pleasure in noticing her merest trifle of speech or action.

When they reached the top, the rare, clear hill-side breeze had blown an apple blossom pink into her face, and her eyes were misty and soft. She slipped down on the ground and sat there quietly for a moment or so, her chin on her hand and her eyes reaching far out over the heather and bracken and purple outline and the shining loch below. Then she drew a tremulous little breath.

"I wish," she said, "oh, how I wish that we need never go back—that we might stay here always—just we three."

Neither Barholm nor his sister answered—perhaps because neither could quite have trusted themselves to words at that particular time.

For a moment Dugald was fiercely happy—made so by her last few words, "Just we three." It thrilled him to his very heart's core.

And Lady Lundie was vaguely sad. The breath of the wind and the scent of the heather brought back to her so much of memory. Well, well, we all have our secrets—the queer echoes in the chamber of memory which may be aroused by the sight of a leaf or a weed or a shell—a word or a touch or a song. We may lock the chamber door and hide away the key, but we lock the echoes in—we cannot lock them out.

There was so much of tender enchantment in the isolation of the spot, that they idled away two or three hours before they could make up their minds to return; and then, to add to the delay, an unforeseen accident occurred. In stepping upon a slightly shelving rock to reach a fern, Joanna's foot slipped upon some moss, and she fell, giving her ankle an unlucky wrench.

It was scarcely a moment's work. She had caught sight of the fern as they followed the path, and had reached at it without pausing in what she was saying. The next instant Barholm looked up at a low cry from her, and saw her lying on the ground with a strangely white face.

"I cannot move my foot, Belle," she said, when they had tried to raise her, and Dugald saw her tremble as she said it. "I have twisted it some way or another. Wait a minute, please." But almost before she had finished speaking, she was lying on Barholm's knee with closed

eyes and snow-pale cheeks, as if every drop of blood had drifted out of her face.

She was not strong against pain, at best, and she was too frail to bear it well then.

"You will have to carry her, Dugald," said Lady Lundie, when Joanna had somewhat recovered. "She is so light that it will not be a very difficult matter; you can stop and rest. Fortunately, we are not very far from the house now."

If she had been far heavier than she was, Dugald Barholm could have carried her twice as far. He was almost an athlete, despite his indolence; and the white face against his shoulder roused him. She did not make any of the young-lady-like speeches another girl would have made; she did not colour when he raised her in his arms—he even saw her turn whiter. She lay still with closed eyes until they reached the house, and there a servant met them with a message. Then she looked up all at once.

And yet the message was a very simple one. A gentleman had called to see Miss Forsythe, but had not left his name. He was a large, fair, youngish gentleman, and wore a Glengary cap.

After this information came a little pause, in which Joanna met her friend's questioning glance with a weary little sigh.

"It is Mr. Lauder," she said. And when Barholm laid her on the sofa she turned her head away and shut her eyes as if she was tired.

The wearer of the Glengary cap did not make his appearance again, as Lady Lundie had been certain he would. A letter came to Joanna the next day, explaining her lover's visit to Loch Ransa. Business had brought him to the nearest town, and he had seized the opportunity to call; and it was business which had hurried him away again.

"I promised Murdoch that I would meet a friend of his in Dundee the day after to-morrow, Joanna," he wrote; "and, of course, I could not break my promise, even for that greatest, dearest pleasure—the pleasure of seeing you for a moment, and hearing you tell me you are at rest and love me. So I must wait until August, or even October, if you do not return until then."

It was several days before Joanna quite recovered from the effects of her accident; and during her indisposition Lady Lundie observed that she actually appeared to shrink from Dugald a little. And yet her manner toward him was never chill or indifferent; but when she met his glance, that inner shadow was always wavering in her eyes, and when spoke to him her voice had its shadow too.

There came some very wet weather after this, which effectually put an end to their wanderings. Scotch mist and drizzle and leaden clouds confined them to the house, and threw the three very much together. Instead of rambling among the bracken over the purple hills, they

were obliged to stay at home and amuse each other as best they could, and sometimes Barholm was not sorry for the change of programme. Joanna, out of doors, he must share with the ferns and flowers and sun-touched water, and the dreamy abstraction born of her sensitive love for such things; but Joanna indoors, sitting by the fire, pale, soft if quiet voice, and sweet if half-wearied smile, was shared with nothing. Only at such times as she forgot him for a moment or so, and sat dreaming in the intense way she had of doing now and then.

He found her very hard to understand in those days. Some subtle instinct taught him that he was never far from her thoughts, but the same instinct was often the cause of some fierce pangs to him. He was near but he could never be nearer; she could not resist his power wholly, but there was an impalpable barrier between them. But the time came at last when he understood it all, and the knowledge was a bitter gaining enough.

The rain and mist had cleared away at length, after nearly two weeks duration, and the first evening of its clearing, Joanna found her way into the garden, in her usual defiance of damp and sparkling, rain-dropping foliage.

"You will take cold, Joanna," said Lady Lundie, when she had made her first step out of the low window on the stone terrace. "Everything is so wet—and that white merino of yours will be ruined."

Joanna turned a little as she stood holding the heavy folds of the white merino in one pretty, thin hand; and as he saw her fair, thoughtful, pale face, and the rapt look in her dreaming eyes, Barholm was struck with a sense of the fitness of her white, soft robe, and the dusk of evening as proper accompaniments to her.

"Everything is so sparkling," she said, a trifle abstractedly to her friend. "And I want some red roses—some of those sweet red ones I see trailing in the wet grass there. I want them." And somehow or other there was a soft, sad longing, expressing itself vaguely in her voice as she said it.

The grass was wet, the trees were wet, the red roses trailed on the ground, heavy with the bright drops in their hearts; the very wind—a soft west wind—was damp, and sweet, and cool when Barholm, a minute or so later, stepped off the terrace to follow the glimmer of white he could see among the foliage in the growing darkness.

The girl was bending over a down-beaten rose-bush when he reached her. Her hands were full of roses, too, great white ones, with here and there a deep red blossom with a heart like blood. She had one of her quiet passions for roses, and her very manner of holding them expressed the tender magnetism of sympathy.

Perhaps, until the moment she raised her face and their eyes met, Barholm had not exactly understood why he had followed her; but in one breath's space, as it were, a shock of eager pain rushed upon and

roused him. He had come to clear away his doubts and learn what his fate was to be.

She held out her laden hands with a little smile. "See," she said. "How could I help coming?"

He caught her hands, roses and all. "How could I help coming?" he said, with so much passionate fervour that he could not quite control his voice. "I came for a rose—a sweet white rose, blooming out here in the wet west wind and the dark. I came for you, Joanna."

But for the darkness he might perhaps have seen the startled change which flew to her face even as he spoke; as it was, he felt a curious stirring in her whole form—a sudden, shaken stirring beginning in the slight hands he clasped.

"For me?" she said, slowly. "For me?"

Then the barriers were swept away. He found words enough then, and voice enough to utter them. She had held him at arm's length before, but now he was the stronger of the two, through the sheer force of his passionate love for her. Few men could have pleaded their cause better than Dugald Barholm pleaded his at this moment. The light touch of her hands, the floating fragrance of the roses she held, the cool darkness itself, all seemed to conspire with him and fill him with a newer fire of hope and tenderness. He poured forth his whole soul in his appeal.

But neither white face nor white figure responded to his words by any yielding or gentle tremor. There was a tensely strained attention in the listener's very silence, and perhaps some subtle magnetism told him before he had ended that all was not right with him. But even when fear forced itself upon him, he could not stay the torrent of his speech. His voice broke that instant, and his spirit faltered, but he could not stop until she herself stopped him all at once. With a strange, half-wild gesture, with a strange catch of breath, with a strange drawing away from his clasping hands, she scattered the red roses on the damp grass at their feet.

"Wait," she said—nay, almost panted; "you must not—oh, hush!"

"Wait!" he echoed. "Why wait? Why be silent? The day for silence is past. Oh, my white rose—my love——"

But his words were never ended. She took a little step toward him, coming so near that her white, uplifted face would have touched his breast if she had let it drop instead of raising it, as she did, with a curious concentrated effort—a sort of sudden appeal to all her desperate, ungirlish, inner strength. There was only the flicker of starlight to see by, but there was light enough to show him what she meant to reveal when she held up her hand.

"See!" she said. "Look here, Mr. Barholm! Oh! look and see——"

See ! He had seen it many times before, that soft, worn little hand, whose massive, antique, opal ring, slipped so loosely up and down the slight forefinger ; but he had never seen it as he saw it then ; for then—just at that moment, it was the crushing of all his hopes. He understood it in an instant ; he might have understood it long ago if his man-love had not been so blind an emotion.

"Joanna !" he said, and his voice fell upon the startled night air, a low cry of despair.

She drew back a little and stood a few feet apart from him, a still, white figure in the dim evening light—not repelling, not reproaching him, only seeming, somehow, so far away. There was a strange silence between them, during which their eyes hung upon each other in a mute sad fashion. Perhaps in that very silence the ghost of the "might have been" floated out of both lives and passed them as they stood—floating by the fallen, perfume-breathing roses, and the rain-laden blossoms into the fragrant darkness.

"Listen to me," she said, at length—as if she was wearied, he thought. "I know you will not plead with me again when I tell you all—all that I thought you must have known. The gentleman who came here to see me a few days ago will be my husband in October. I have promised him that much. He loves me—no one could love me more ; he is true, and he loves me, and—I have given him my word. Try to understand me—oh ! *try* to understand me !" and she wrung her hands in a sudden wildness of new misery.

He stood still, with folded arms, and looked at her. "I understand," he said, slowly. "Yes, I understand."

There was a painful inconsistency in the mere fact of such a man and such a woman controlling themselves as these two did, during the brief interview. Just as the girl had controlled this lover of hers a hundred times before, with that quiet, steadfast, inner self she controlled him now. She would not give him the chance to conquer her, as she knew he would do, if for one moment her bond upon him was loosened.

She bent down and began, half mechanically, to pick up the fallen roses one by one, until she had regained all but a single blossom, which lay at his feet. He had not offered to touch the others, but when she stooped for this, he bent too, and put aside her hand gently. "Nay, leave me this much," he said. "A white rose, Joanna—only one !—and the world is so full of roses."

She raised herself upright and held it out to him, and even in the darkness he could tell that all at once she had begun to tremble from head to foot. "Take it," she whispered ; "it is all I have left to give you."

Two hours later, when the moon had risen and was flooding solemn

hills, and purple heath, and silver loch with lucent brightness, Lady Lundie slipped upstairs from the drawing-room, where she had been talking with Dugald, to Joanna's chamber.

Since the moment when she had stood on the stone terrace, holding up her white dress in one hand, Joanna had not been in the sitting-room. She had gone to her bedroom at once on returning to the house, and there her friend found her.

The wide window was thrown open to the soft night air when Lady Lundie entered the apartment, and the flood of moonlight streamed in upon a prostrate figure lying upon the floor in a bath of radiance as it were—a white figure with hidden face and thickly falling hair.

Lady Lundie knelt down at its side. "Joanna," she said, in a strangely tender voice, "Joanna!"

It seemed as if it was by a mutual yet silent consent that she took her position, and the hidden face was with one quiet, swift movement hidden on her lap.

It was so like Joanna Forsythe, that swift, speechful change of posture.

"And so," said Lady Lundie, breaking the silence which ruled both for a few moments. "And so Dugald must go away to-morrow."

"Yes," answered Joanna, "if he thinks it best."

Another pause, in which the older woman twisted about her finger a thick tress of the brown hair; then all at once, strange to say, she let the brown tress slip away, and dropped her face in her hands with a struggled-against sob.

"Joanna," she cried, "think for one moment what you are putting away from you—out of your life."

Joanna lifted her face suddenly—a face pale, yet calm, in a sad strained way; a face looking paler than the moonlight in its cloud-like frame of brown hair.

"*Parole d'honneur!*" she said, as if half unconsciously. "*Parole d'honneur!*"

"But you do not know," her friend pleaded. "You cannot. *I know*, Joanna; and you are putting it away from you for ever. You can never bring it back."

The soft, worn young hand wearing the opal ring crept up to her shoulder with a curious, caressing touch.

"Hush, Belle!" in an almost absent way. "Hush! What did he say?"

"Nothing," was the bitter reply. "Nothing, as it may seem to you. Only that all was over—only that you had left him no hope—only what men always say under such circumstances; and I left him sitting there alone, resting his head on his hand and looking at the white rose you gave him. That is all."

She could not help being impassioned. She had flung away her own

life's bliss not many years ago, and the old chord was so strongly touched to-night that she was stirred to some faint bitterness even against Joanna Forsythe, who must needs set aside love for honour's sake. *She* had set aside love for less.

In a minute more she was startled not a little. The white figure had begun to shiver—faintly at first; and then with greater strength the nervous hands caught hers in a wild grasp. There was a tiny gasp for breath, as it were—another, and yet another; and Joanna had slipped into her arms sobbing, panting, and shaken with such a force of long-crushed passion as was terrible to look upon.

It was not weeping—it was something worse; something infinitely worse in Joanna Forsythe. All the bitter, slow trials of the girl's life won their tears in this one convulsion of emotion. Trials long unwept had their share of it, perhaps; trials of disappointment and secret pain, of hope blighted, and fears realized. She had been so strong and faithful to her girlish principle of self-control before, but now for the brief moment she lost her power.

"I have been drifting—drifting—drifting all my life," she cried; "and now, when I see the shore shining near me, I must pass it by for ever—for ever—for ever!"

Perhaps through all the years of their acquaintance, Lady Lundie had half accused Joanna Forsythe of coldness. It is certain that until this hour she had never seen her as she really was; she had never dreamed of the strength of repressed feeling which lay beneath her almost oddly, ungirlish reticence and quiet. This wildly weeping creature, whose passionate voice was a cry of despair—nay, almost of rebellion—was something far, far apart from the girl whose serene eyes and quiet tone had held at bay a man who was ten years her senior, and whose love for her was akin to adoration. When at last the sudden storm had spent itself, and she sat pale and breathless, Lady Lundie stared at her in an actual doubt as to her reality. She began to comprehend dimly.

"Joanna!" she cried out. "Joanna, you love him!"

"Yes," answered Joanna, slowly. "Yes—I love him!"

"And yet mean to hold faith with this other?"

"I can see no other way," said Joanna. "He loved me first; he has been true to me, and he has my promise. Yes, I shall hold faith with him."

And meeting her steadfast eyes, Lady Lundie felt that she would not falter.

The next day Dugald Barholm left Loch Ransa, and thereafter the two were alone together. By a tacit consent they let the past lie in silence. Joanna was herself again, it seemed; only as the days slipped by, one by one, she was paler and more prone to the old dreaming silences. After Dugald was gone, his name was rarely mentioned

between them. They took their usual strolls over heath and hills, and brought back treasures of moss and gorse and fern, as they had always done ; but their conversation was always quiet in its tone, and untouched by any reference to what was or might have been. Fond as they were of each other in a friendly, womanly way, the subtle chord of perfect inner sympathy had never stretched itself from Lady Lundie's heart to Joanna Forsythe. It is just possible that had the two summer months following Dugald Barholm's departure been spent with other women, the girl's heart would not have been so folded within itself. It is *just* possible, I say ; for Joanna's very childhood had been as utterly her own as her womanhood was ; none had ever penetrated its secrets.

It was not until the very day of her return to Edinburgh that the silence that existed between the two on the one subject was broken.

Just at the last moment of her stay—just at the last moment when the carriage awaited her at the door, Lady Lundie was standing with Joanna at one of the windows, when she saw the grave, brown eyes fill with a yearning shadow, and all at once the girl turned her face upward and spoke to her.

"Tell him," she said, "when you see him—tell him what I did not dare to tell him then—tell him that the white rose was a symbol ; and tell him, too, Belle, that I made you promise to say to him just these words : '*Parole d'honneur*.'"

In October she was married. The next Christmas Lady Lundie received a farewell letter from her, written on the eve of her departure with her husband for India, where business had unexpectedly called him.

Three years after, Lady Lundie was in Berlin with her husband. At the theatre one night her attention was drawn by a bystander to a party in a box at a short distance from her own.

"A little Scotchwoman, who has been in Calcutta for the last few years with her husband," said the gentleman. "I call your attention to her not so much because she is a beauty as because she is one of those women who possess a wondrous power of controlling fascination over people. Not a common fascination, either—a curious charm which no one quite understands, and no one can resist. Her husband is one of the happiest men I know, and adores her ; but though she is beautifully subservient in a delicate, womanly way to his lightest wish, I always feel as if there was a trifling mystery in their union ; I don't know why exactly ; perhaps it is only a fancy, after all. Look at her, Lady Lundie. She is speaking to him now."

Lady Lundie turned her eyes towards the box indicated, and gave a little start. The lady spoken of was a slender, quiet little body in white drapery—a little woman, with a wondrously fair face, sweet, intense brown eyes, and soft masses of brown hair the colour of autumn leaves. It was Joanna Lauder.

It was not many minutes, of course, before the two were face to face, for Lady Lundie made her way to the box.

It was Joanna Lauder now ; but Joanna Lauder differed very little from Joanna Forsythe. It was the same steadfast, silent face Lady Lundie met in her first glance—just the same face, only with a subtle shadow upon its sweet lines.

"And Mr. Dugald Barholm?" she inquired of her friend during the course of their evening's conversation. "Where is he?"

"He spent a few days of the shooting season with us at Loch Ransa," answered Lady Lundie. "He spoke of you to me often. He is not married yet, Joanna."

And Joanna Lauder, looking across the house, saw, not the painted scenery of the stage, but a faintly starlit garden, where the blossoms hung their heads and trailed in the grass, heavy with summer rain, and almost felt again the fragrant wet west wind that blew upon her brow when she bent down to take up the one white rose which had fallen at Dugald Barholm's feet.



SERENADE.

STILL slumber on, nor let this song
Disturb thy calm repose.
May watchful angels round thee throng
Till morning's eyes uncloze.

Yes, slumber on, but through thy dreams
May music gently glide,
Like sunlight into shaded streams,
Or starlight o'er the tide.

Sweet be those dreams till morning break
And sunrise flood the plain,
Then memory like a bird will wake,
And sing my song again.

LARRY'S HUT.

OUR cottage stands a quarter of a mile from the village, separated from the highway only by the trim little lawn in which my mother and Nellie and I cultivate our favourite plants and shrubs. But I could see neither plant nor shrub as I stood at the hall-door on this Sunday I am going to tell of, for the heavy darkness of the November evening had engulfed them all. I watched the last glimmer of the lantern which the maid carried as she walked with my mother and Nellie to church; then I drew back into the hall with a shiver of relief, and locked and bolted the door. The drawing-room was warm and bright and snug, but my first act was to poke the fire into a still more cheerful blaze. Then I sat idly before it for a time. I pictured my mother alone in our seat in church; and Nellie at the harmonium, taking my place because I was not well enough to go out to-night. Then I wondered whether Mr. Carr, our young unmarried rector, would walk home with them after service, as he was very fond of doing when Nellie was there. Whether Mr. Carr came or not, I had no fear for them through that walk from the village; I should have laughed if anyone had suggested such a thing to me. We knew every villager well; we even knew by sight the men who were felling the trees on the heath, for in our long winter walks we often passed them, either at their work, or resting, with their pipes, in the shelter of Larry's hut—a wretched little shed enough, too, to be the only shelter they could get on the bleak upland.

It was not very likely I should begin to fear for my mother and Nellie, when this was the seventh winter we had spent in this village in perfect safety and peace. Peace! Was it really peace for all of us? The word, so wide and calm and wonderful in its meaning, was hardly yet my own to grasp and keep. There were times when I felt that it would come, and that my life need not be a listless or an idle one; but there were other times when I fancied it was no nearer to me than it had been on that day, a year ago, when the news had come to me—to me, first of all, as I stood at the garden gate in the sunshine!—that Alick had been drowned on his way home to me. Ah me, where had the sunshine gone when I crept back to the house, wrapped in the chill grey mist? And at such times the fingers of my right hand would close upon his diamonds, and my heart burn and quiver in the cruel grasp of its overmastering sorrow. It would have been so much easier, I thought, to be patient and content if I could have had Alick's last glance and last words to remember. If I had been able to recall those, instead of that horrible solitude of the storm-driven sea, and the utter loneliness of Alick's death.

I rose from my seat before the fire—my thoughts should not wander in the old sad way on this Sunday night—and went to the piano to sing; drifting at last, as I generally did, into the beautiful hymn which pleads for those in peril on the sea. Then the tears, that come so often to my eyes now, welled up and fell upon my fingers; on Alick's ring; on the diamonds I loved so dearly, because they told me always of the wealth and richness of his love, and of the brightness and purity of the home in which I tried to follow him now with my longing thoughts. The notes swam before my eyes, so I bent my head upon the music-desk and let the tears have their own way. The room was hushed and still, the whole house was wrapped in silence, when I heard a knocking at the front door; not loud, but long and hurried. A quivering pain ran through me for an instant, less like fear than a foreboding, and, with my heart beating heavily, I sat motionless while the sound died away. If it should be repeated I must go. The silence had hardly settled, when it was broken once more; this time the summons was even quicker and more hurried than before, and I did not hesitate another moment.

"What is it?" I inquired, nervously, before I opened the door, but with my fingers ready on the latch.

"Quick! open the door," said a man's voice, low and anxious.

"Why?" I asked, a hundred fears assailing me at once.

"Don't stop to question," returned the voice, sounding muffled, because the hurried words were uttered in a whisper. "Your mother has been taken ill in church, and they are carrying her home. Open the door and show a light. They will be at the gate in a moment."

Not an instant longer did my fingers hesitate on lock or bolt. I threw the door open wide, and turned hastily to fetch the lamp, my knees tottering under me, my heart beating rapidly in its fear. The man who had spoken to me through the closed door walked at once into the hall behind me; then, turning coolly round, he locked the door upon us both, and pocketed the key. In a lightning flash I understood the truth then, and for an instant cowered to the wall in a helpless panic of alarm. He came up to me, a painted mask covering his face except where the eyes shone through the paper sockets.

"All right now," he said calmly, "don't bother about moving the lamp. I want its light in there for a bit. Come along."

But at the rude grip of the man's fingers on my left hand, my trembling helplessness fled, and I started from him with all my strength.

"I won't keep you long," he said, as he followed me into the lighted room, speaking in a rough, determined tone, which he was evidently trying to disguise. "At least it will be your own fault if I do. Pass me over that ring. That's all I want, so the quicker you are about it the better."

The immovable painted face was close to mine; and the savage, hungry eyes were fixed upon me behind their lifeless sockets. I felt—as my own eyes fastened themselves upon the repulsive face—that soon my senses must leave me, and I fought with this feeling as an animal fights with death.

“Never mind staring,” exclaimed the man, roughly seizing my wrist once more. “You’ll never make much out of my face; don’t try. Hand me over the diamonds, and let me be off. I’d rather you did it than trouble me to help myself; not that I’ll make much of a trouble of it, either. I’ll give you two minutes from now, not a second longer. Set about it at once.”

At first no words would come to my lips when I wanted them; but before the two minutes were over—so utterly weak was I, and so isolated from all help—I had begun to plead with this robber, begging him to take other things and leave me my betrothal ring. I really think I told him, in my fear and my distress, how the ring had been put upon my finger; how I had promised never to remove it; and how I never could through all my life, because Alick was dead. The words came tottering from my lips until they ended almost in a prayer, “Take my watch, or what you will, only leave me this.”

“I don’t want the watch,” he answered, carelessly. “It might be a trouble to me, and I’d rather be without it. But the ring I’ve set my mind on. I’ve had my eye upon it once or twice when you played at church, and the lights fell on it. I’ve been watching for you to stay at home alone at night, and now I’m not going to be balked, I can tell you. Now then, the two minutes are gone, and so is my patience.”

“I shall never take this ring off,” I faltered, locking my fingers tightly together, “*never*. I promised I never would. Do you expect,” I cried, with a sudden change of tone in my despair, “to commit such a robbery as this and go free? In spite of your masked face, I could swear to you by your voice before any judge in England.”

“I dare say,” put in the man, with a short laugh, “when you happen to hear it before a judge. Wait till then. But my time’s valuable just now. I’ll take the ring myself, as you’re so gingerly about breaking a promise.”

I kept my hands from the man as long as I had any strength in them, but I was small and weak, and he was big and strong, so that it was but a slight delay, after all.

“Silly to waste the little strength you have,” he muttered, contentedly, when he felt both my hands entirely captive in his powerful grasp. “What purpose has it served? See, it doesn’t take me long to draw the ring off. I’ve known a tighter fit. Ah, ah, these stones are worth looking at; they do my eyes good. Cost a fortune once, I’ll be bound, though it’s a good while ago. They’ve been in somebody’s family a many years, I guess; so it’s about time they were in somebody else’s.

There, you haven't broke your promise, after all. Now I'll let myself out, and take my advice; bolt the door safely behind me, and don't open it again so innocently when you're alone in the house."

I stood quite still until the man had left; then—because he called to me that he should wait outside until I had locked myself in—I moved slowly to the door and turned the key. As I did so, a sudden idea, strong as a resolution, came into my mind. I listened until I could hear no longer the sound of the heavy footsteps crushing the gravel; waited a few minutes longer to allow them to pass the gate; then, wrapping my black waterproof about me, I noiselessly opened the door and stepped out, closing it as noiselessly behind me.

The darkness gave me fresh courage; presently, I knew, my eyes would grow accustomed to it; and out in the road I should surely be able to see the figure in advance. I crept cautiously down the garden path, closed the gate behind me without the echo of a sound, and I was out in the turnpike road. No need to pause in doubt which way to turn. I felt very sure that the man would not walk towards the village with that ring about him, when he knew my alarm would be raised after service. No; he would take the opposite way, of course and presently perhaps I should be able to distinguish him before me. I did not fear being seen myself; my black dress and cloak made me like a part of the universal darkness which surrounded me. But still I took the precaution of keeping close to the hedge bank, while I pierced the gloom before me with my eager, searching eyes. I have a keen, far sight, and presently I was able to distinguish a form moving on in front which I knew must be the man who had stolen Alick's ring from me. Ah! what a desperate courage the consciousness of that loss seemed to have given me. All my love and sorrow and despair rose in a kind of wild, impetuous bravery, shutting out just then all room for timidity. One idea alone possessed me. Could I let this thief take from my sight the ring with which Alick had made me his betrothed—as sacred to me since his death as if it had made me his wife? Could I bear to lose for ever this precious pledge of his rich love and trust, as I had lost him a year ago? A cry hovered on my lips again and again as I thought of this, but it was not a cry of fear. On and on I went, walking noiselessly upon the grass beneath the hedge; only dimly seeing the line of road before me, only but very faintly descriing the dark figure on the grey line. Suddenly I missed it, and I started and stopped in bewilderment. How could it be? Had he crossed a hedge which I could never climb, and left me here even more helpless than I should have been if I had stayed at home? But I dared not waste a moment standing idle. I started again, still creeping cautiously on beneath the hedge, and trying hard to recall the bearings of this part of the road. By the help of the outline of a thick group of trees before me I could tell that I was now not many

yards from a narrow, tree-shadowed lane, which had an ugly name in the neighbourhood on account of a murder having been committed there, one winter night, upon a defenceless traveller who had ventured to shorten his way to the town by taking the near cut across the heath. Many times Nellie and I had walked up here on sunny summer days, but always had each of us tacitly avoided it either in gloom or solitude. I hesitated at the turning, shrinking involuntarily from entering the dense darkness of the lane; but I knew it was my only chance of keeping the man in sight at all, for the lane opened soon again into a field which bordered the heath, and there I should be able to see him if—as I felt sure—he had turned here.

Looking back now upon that night, I do not remember that I was pursuing any definite plan, or indulging any definite hope. I think I only felt that to let this masked man escape me was to lose Alick's ring for ever. Except in one or two horrible moments, I hardly realized the danger of what I was doing—I, a girl, alone in the darkness; no help within call now that the high road was left. The one great and intense longing to recover Alick's ring swallowed up most other thoughts; and now and then there flashed across me the conviction that the darkness was my safeguard.

In this steep, dark lane I had no need to shrink to the hedge bank; I made my way straight on as best I could, until suddenly a crackling of twigs startled me, and I drew back crouching against the hedge. Then memory came to my aid. The old gate which separated this lane from the field beyond was always kept fastened; and, besides that, between its upper bars thorns had been interlaced. My heart-beats ceased for a minute. The man must be climbing this gate now. The relief it gave me to find that I was so certainly upon his track was intense, but upon this came the terrible consciousness that I, too, should have to climb this gate; and should I ever be able to do it noiselessly? No, I dare not trust myself. Covered by the darkness of the lane, I crept forward and fixed my eyes upon where I knew the outline of the gate would be visible beyond the trees which closed in this lane. Just as it shaped itself to my eyes, a man's figure alighted on the other side and turned as if to disentangle something. A ghastly fear seized me when I found that I could see the large masked face; not, of course, plainly enough even to have told that it was masked unless I had known it before, but still sufficiently to give me a new fear for my own danger of discovery in this pursuit. A thought struck me. Feeling about the skirt of my mourning dress, I tore from it a wide strip of crape and tied it over my face. An entirely and wholly black figure now, I could venture out into the open field beyond this gate, as soon as I could feel sure that the man I was tracking would be quite out of earshot. Then I climbed the gate, my dress every moment getting entangled in the thorns, while the darkness—intensified so much

by the covering on my face—and my own nervousness, made me stumble at almost every step after I had freed the gate and was attempting to run across the fields that I might as swiftly as possible gain the covert of the trees upon the heath.

I had allowed sufficient time, for there was no sign before me now of the dark figure I was pursuing. Once gain the shelter of the woody ground, and I felt I should be safe from the chance of being seen; while, if he crossed the heath on the cart-road beside the trees, I could follow him, being myself in safety. But though I sped rapidly on into the wood—my eyes aching and burning in their strained gaze out into the wide gloom of the unsheltered heath—I could see no glimpse of the thief I had followed. I was hesitating a minute, baffled and bewildered, when the silence which surrounded me was suddenly broken by a muttered curse. I caught at a tree near me, knowing it would be death to me to cry or fall. The man then was close beside me; had stumbled, here quite near me, over one of the tree stumps which had so often interrupted my own steps. I staggered as I supported myself by the tree, trembling in every limb, and scarcely daring to draw my breath for fear of his discovering my proximity. A horrible fear overpowered me, which I had hardly had time to feel before now; a terrible consciousness of how entirely one step might put my life in this ruffian's power. Straining every sense I possessed in painful intentness, I heard the footsteps retreating on the rough soil towards the cart road, and then all was silent again. A little higher up, across the road, I could distinguish now the outline of Larry's hut, and I moved on towards it; still keeping back among the trees, and still watching intently the strip of bare heath which lay between the wood and the hut. Exactly opposite the doorless entrance of the half-ruined shed I stopped, my ears aching and throbbing in the strain I put upon them, my eyes feeling as if the lids could never fit and cover them again.

But it was not very long before I saw a glimmer of light in the old hut. I leaned forward, my very breath muffled, as my eyes followed this speck of light which slowly moved about the shed. It showed me nothing, but it convinced me of the presence there of the man of whom I dreaded to lose sight. What was he going to do? My pulses throbbed with an acute pain as I waited to see. At last the light was still for a moment, then fell to the ground. But a candle, stuck in the wall beside the door, had first been lighted by it, and would have allowed me to distinguish many objects within the hut if I had cared to look away from the man's figure. He was standing before the candle now, with my ring on his hand, examining the stones, moving it that the flickering, glaring light should fall and be caught by every brilliant separately. Slowly and methodically, after his deliberate investigation, he folded a piece of soft paper round and round my ring,

then turned, with the parcel in his hand, as if to leave the place again. His face—masked still—was raised now fully in my sight. Yes, he was coming away. Ah! could I follow him further still? My heart sank with a dead weight of utter hopelessness, but it was scarcely for more than an instant. He did not pass the doorway. Stopping just within it, he raised the hand which held the packet; and when, half a minute afterwards, he brought his hand down, the packet was not in it. Then surely in some little crevice over the broken doorway he had hidden the ring, to lie in secure concealment until the alarm had blown over, and it might be safe to carry the stolen diamonds away. I thought all this, and yet I felt that every power I possessed was merged in that one strained effort to *see*. Once more the man I watched stood before the flaming candle. Drawing the mask from his face, he tore it into pieces and burned each piece separately, watching the ashes fall upon the turfy soil. Then he blew out the light leisurely, and came from the hut. And now it was to *hear* that I strained every power I possessed. The candle-light had robbed me of my power of seeing in the gloom for awhile; but I must be assured that he was safe in the distance before I ventured forth. Oh, thank heaven! the footsteps faded in the opposite direction from that in which we had come. Evidently, the thief was going to take the short cut across the heath to the village, where I knew the men lived who were employed in felling these trees. He must be one of them, then, as I had guessed, for unless he had known that way very well, he would not have trusted to finding it in the darkness. Minute after minute I waited in my concealment, allowing him time to walk a quarter of a mile away before I would dare to leave the darkness of the wood, even in my black dress and with the black covering on my face. If I could but have *heard* his steps in the distance, to have been sure that he was gone! I crept a few paces out upon the heath road, then paused; my heart thumping against my side, great beads of perspiration starting on my forehead. He might be lurking here close to the shed, keeping guard over the stolen treasure; the intense and deathlike silence seemed the very breath of treachery and hidden danger. Stooping nearer the ground, and creeping noiselessly, I went on a few steps further. Suddenly I rose upright, with a swimming in my head and ears. I had fancied that I heard a man's breath close to my ear. Only fancy; and I crept on again. The open doorway of the hut at last; another step, and I was within! Another step! but this step threw down a crazy old bench which must have been propped there, and the sound went out upon the heath with a noise, awful to me as a sudden thunder-clap. Great heaven! if the robber should be prowling in the darkness near, and, hearing this should hasten in to see what it could be. If he should come and find me there, within the isolated hut; a feeble, panic-stricken woman, who had it in her power to witness against him *if he let her leave this place alive!* I caught at the doorpost to support myself. Every limb seemed

powerless, yet still my ears were keenly listening for a returning foot-step with the old strained eagerness. But no sound broke the silence which followed the fall of the timber, and presently a desperate courage came to me. Still holding fast to the doorpost, I raised myself by the loose timber which lay on the ground, and, supporting myself by one hand, groped along the boards above the opening with the other; groped round them, and above them, and behind them, while the cold drops fell from my face—uplifted in the darkness.

For some time this groping was to no purpose, but at last my searching fingers found a crevice between the jamb and the wall; and, moving slowly, slowly along in it, were stopped by a little roll of paper fitted tightly in one spot. This, then, was the parcel I had watched the man fold—this was Alick's ring—and I drew it from its hiding-place with hands that shook as if they were palsied. Could it be really mine once more? Alick's ring mine again!

Now I was free to leave this desolate solitude and go home. Home! what a long way off it was, and what danger might not now be lying in wait for me between it and this dreary spot. Ah! this new shrinking cowardice would never do. I had Alick's ring safe; the man of whom I was in terror had disappeared in another direction; I would fear nothing now. I said it again and again; yet, when I turned to leave the hut, an awful and overwhelming terror seized me lest the man whom I had myself watched had been watching me, and now was waiting for me out there in the darkness. I drew back, actually forgetting I was in darkness there and could not have been watched as he had been. I fancied I could hear that muttered curse repeated just outside the hut; then that a man's laugh burst out close to me there among the loose timber; I was growing to feel that I never could venture again alone upon the heath. Should I shriek for help, putting all the strength I had into one piercing cry? or should I lie motionless where I was? Now that the long tension of excitement was over, I was as helpless and nervous as a child.

I have no idea how long I had crouched at the back of the old shed—it must have been a long time even in reality, and seemed an endless time to me—when a sudden, nervous access of fear gave me the impetus I needed. The wind, in its unfettered race across the upland, had blown the piece of paper I had taken from my ring straight up against me to touch my very eyes. The terror this sudden rustling and touch gave me was childish, and over in a moment, but during that moment I had started from my position, left the hut, and was speeding on my way to the covert of the trees again. Even then, even in my black dress and in the heavy darkness, I could not trust myself to take the road. Again and again I stumbled and fell; again and again it seemed as if some fiendish power held me back and baffled me in my desperate haste. Had I ever known such darkness before this night? Had the

skies ever seemed to give no glimmer of light before? Would the stile never come that led into that field beyond the heath? Surely I must have passed it, even though I was feeling my way as well as probing the blackness with my aching, burning eyes.

Ah! it was found at last. Across the field I went with dragging, feeble steps, and found the fastened gate out into the lane. But could I climb it, with the thorns so thickly interlaced there? I had never paused to doubt this on my way to the heath long hours ago; I would not pause to doubt it now. Even if I fell, the pain that I should suffer could not be greater than the pain that I was suffering then. What was this singing in my ears, this knocking in my head? One or two weak attempts, which failed; one last effort; and I was in the narrow, tree-darkened and sin-haunted lane, which I had never dared to tread alone even in the brightest day of summer, and whose darkness now was like the darkness of a sealed grave. With both arms stretched out as far as I could reach, to keep my dark way clear, I crept feebly and slowly down this lane. I have often since tried to fancy the effect of meeting such a figure, enveloped from head to foot in black, and with arms spread like a phantom's.

So I came down the lane at a creeping pace, groping my way inch by inch. Only conscious—as it seems to me now—that I was passing the spot where an awful crime had been committed on such a night as this. Just when I could distinguish that I was near the end of this lane; just when I saw the break in the trees where the high road crossed the opening; I caught sight of lights passing before me slowly. But after having watched one human form for so long in terror and alarm, I shrank timidly from the chance of encountering others. They might be rough men, too; so the utter darkness and loneliness were best. But while I hesitated, I heard my own name shouted again and again; loudly, cheerily, anxiously, longingly.

"Olive!—Miss Lee!—Olive."

Ah, these were friends then, seeking me, come to save me. I clasped my hands above my head and tried to utter a moment's prayer of thankfulness. I tried to call in answer. But no sound came from my benumbed and stiffening lips. And then this utter incapacity to utter a cry began to frighten me almost more than all else. They were passing on. They would leave me there, not knowing they had been near me. Must I, even at the last minute, die alone there in the darkness? Yes; it must be, for my strength was spent at last.

Again I tried to call with all the power remaining to me, but the faint tone, like a whisper, which escaped my lips left the silence undisturbed. There was only one chance left. I gathered up my little remnant of strength, and with the fleet, short-lived courage of despair, I ran. I think now that my running was as slow as others' walking, but I fancied then that I must be rapidly nearing those rescuers who again pierced

the night silence with their calls to me. Only a few steps on before me now they were, moving very slowly and searching the wide road on either side with their lowered lanterns. I saw forms familiar to me. I saw Mr. Carr; I saw Nellie—nearest of all to me was Nellie. *One last effort—only one now!*

I came up behind Nellie; I turned to look into her face—and then I fell before her on the ground.

* * * * *

Christmas was past, and there were snowdrops lying on my bed, when I was first able clearly to recall that Sunday night. I could lie calm and restful then, for the terrible fever which had dragged me to the gates of death had left behind it only a great weakness and tiredness, no pain at all. I could bear to remember everything; because, more real and vivid than the terrors of that night, were the memories of beautiful dreams of Alick which had visited me often in my pain. I remembered how in one dream he himself had put the stolen ring back upon my finger, whispering, as he did so, that he knew I had not broken my promise, and that he loved and trusted me for ever. Ah, how sweet to feel that, even in the glory above, he could love and trust me still.

"Awake again already?" smiled Nellie, as she came softly into my room and sat herself beside me on the bed; "I left you sleeping, and I've kept mamma away, and—"

"And what, Nellie?"

"Nothing," she answered, gently, laying her warm hand on my wasted one. "Do you guess who laid the snowdrops on your bed, Olive?"

"Of course I do. Nellie, I've been wanting you to come in—only you—I want you to take off this cap and let me look in the glass."

"What vanity," she smiled merrily, though I could see that her eyes saddened, too.

"I know I am made to wear it to hide my hair," I went on, trying to push it back with my feeble fingers. "Nellie, I'm not afraid of seeing. I know I had a great fear on that Sunday night when I—fell ill, and I am not too childish to hear that it—turned my hair—white."

Nellie's soft clear laugh was good to hear, and the glass was before me in a moment. "Why, Olive," she cried, bending impulsively to kiss me, "I never—we never imagined you would dream of such a thing as *that*. We only wanted to hide from you—just yet—that most of your hair had been cut off in your fever. There it is, you see, as bright as ever, only—only exceedingly short."

That was all, and I heaved a slow sigh of relief. There are few girls of twenty who would like to wake to the discovery that their hair is white, though—like myself—they may have lost all ambition for themselves as entirely as if it had whitened so from age.

"Now we will not say one word more about that night—yet,"

whispered Nellie, putting aside the glass, and then returning to me with her bright eyes very full of sunshine.

"Yes ; one thing more," I pleaded, laying the fingers of my right hand tenderly upon Alick's ring, "I remember it all distinctly. I remember following—this, and finding it, and saving it ; but I never put it on. I felt—I remember that I felt as if I had no right to put it on ; and—once I dreamed—Nellie, who *did* put it on my finger when I was too ill to know ?"

"Who should have done it ?" Nellie asked, with a wonderful soft brilliance in her eyes. "Oh, don't ask me any questions, dear. Wait, and ask—mother."

Ah, I had no need to ask. Looking into Nellie's face, I read it all.

"It was Alick," I said, and the whispered words came from my heart like a prayer.

Yes, it was Alick ! Oh, the sudden sunshine which those few words flung richly on all the years before me. Yes, it was Alick ; and presently they let him come to me and tell me of his rescue from the sea. And he took my poor thin hand in his, and laid his warm brave lips upon it, but would not let me speak to him, even to tell him I had never broken my promise. Somehow he seemed to know it all quite well without my words.

Two things he told me afterwards which I was very glad to hear. One was, that no one in the village could quite understand the mysterious, sudden disappearance of one of the men who had been employed on the heath. He had been the first to reach Larry's Hut on the Monday morning after my night walk, but had left it again before his companions came up to him, and had never been seen or heard of since. The other pleasant thing Alick told me was, that he did not at all object to my short hair.

MARK HARDCASTLE.



SIGURD'S BEARD.

From the Norwegian.

WEARIED out with a long day's hunting amongst the mountains, Sigurd, the most renowned and powerful of Norwegian chieftains, lay sleeping in the shadow of the pine forest, his old grey cloak wrapped round his head, his thick, red beard descending far below his girdle, when Björn, the son of Swerker, passed by.

"What sturdy vagrant is this," thought Björn, "who dares to wear in Sigurd's land a beard longer and redder than Sigurd's own? It were a mercy now to rid him of it, lest the poor fellow should chance, for his presumption, to lose both beard and head."

Almost ere the thought had fully crossed his mind, Björn had drawn a sharp knife from his girdle, and applied himself with such good-will and dexterity to his self-imposed task that in a very few moments the face of the redoubted Sigurd was bare as a new-born child's.

"I wonder whether he will know himself again," thought Björn, as he walked leisurely away.

It was after sunset when Sigurd awoke, and, Heaven and earth, what a waking was that! No lioness, robbed of her cubs, ever raged as did the great chieftain, when, on raising his hand to stroke his beard, he discovered that he had no beard left to stroke—no, not so much as a single hair to swear by. Nor were the indignation and grief of his followers less keen when they learned the fearful indignity that had been offered to their chief; for a beard the like of which was not to be found in the whole world reflected distinction on every man who stood in any relation, however humble or remote, to its illustrious owner.

"May the hair never again grow on our chins till we have nailed over Sigurd's gate the head of the wretch who hath robbed the world of Sigurd's beard!" cried five hundred voices. And forthwith all the knives in the castle were put into requisition, and soon weeping wives and mothers bore away piles of hair, red, brown, and golden, to be thenceforth hoarded among their most sacred treasures. This was all very well in its way, but it brought them no nearer the point at which they aimed—namely, the discovery of the audacious criminal; and Sigurd's thirst for vengeance waxed hotter with delay.

"By the beards of my fathers" (this was the oath by which Sigurd was now obliged to swear), "I will burn every village in Norway if the thief be not delivered up to me within three days," cried he one morning, on hearing from his desponding servants that no clue to the offender had yet been discovered. The news of this threat spread far and wide, exciting everywhere the utmost consternation, till at length it reached the ears of Björn himself:

"How, in the name of all the gods, should I know that a ragged fellow sleeping under a tree was the great Sigurd!" cried the astonished youth. "I took him for some sturdy beggar, or man-at-arms in search of a master, and thought, forsooth, I should be doing Sigurd service in cutting off a beard that might claim to match with his. Heavens! how he must have raged! I would have given half my remaining life—or just one day and a quarter—to have witnessed his waking."

"For our sakes, my lord, if not for your own, leave jesting for once, and cast about in your mind how the wrath of Sigurd may be averted," pleaded Hugur, the oldest and wisest of Björn's vassals, and he who had brought him the tidings of Sigurd's oath.

"I might offer him the loan of my beard until his own hath grown again, but that I fear it would scarce match in colour with his hair," laughed the incorrigible youth. "Or thinkest thou, Hugur, that it would soothe his wounded pride were I to ask for the pattern of that cloak I found him sleeping in, which, doubtless, his great grandmother made for her worthy husband out of her oldest petticoat?"

"For Heaven's sake, Björn, speak not such words, lest the birds of the air carry them to Sigurd," implored the old man.

"What matters it now what the birds may twitter in Sigurd's ear," retorted Björn, "since the grisly old bear will never forgive the liberty I have taken with his shaggy beard?"

"But on that score you are safe, my lord, since Sigurd doth not know that the deed was yours," said Hugur anxiously.

"He knows not yet, but he assuredly will know, ere the moon be two days older," returned Björn. "Peace, Hugur; peace, I say. Dost think I would let the innocent suffer for my folly? Go, saddle my horse, old friend; and let not my followers guess wherefore I ride alone to Sigurd's castle, till it is too late for them to poke their long lances into what is no concern of theirs."

Very slowly Hugur was brought to promise obedience to his master's commands, and urgent were his entreaties to be allowed to accompany him; but Björn was fixed in his resolve to go on his errand alone.

"My beardless lion will, I fear me, prove a right terrible beast," quoth he; "so thou must needs stay at home, my good Hugur, and make of little Harold a wiser man than his elder brother hath proved himself."

With these words, the gravest he had ever been heard to utter, Björn mounted his horse, and, humming a lively air, rode briskly down the castle hill: and no man, save Hugur, knew how small were his chances of ever riding up it again.

At the window of her chamber in her father's castle, sat Gerda, Sigurd's only child. Young was she, and very fair to look upon; yet for all her youth and beauty, her face wore an anxious and wearied expression, as of one ill at ease in her life. Of a truth a being so

gentle was sadly out of place in that gloomy fortress, swarming with rough men, and for ever ringing with the clash of arms: and fain would she have fled from it, back to the milder land, where, under her aunt Asfrieda's tender care, the days of her childhood had passed peacefully away.

But, alas, flight was impossible. And, moreover, how dared she return to her adopted home, since it was the wise Asfrieda's express command which had driven her thence.

"Grieve not, my child," said the lady, as Gerda, at parting, clung to her neck, "for in my magic mirror have I foreseen that thy happiness is menaced by a great danger, which thy presence in Norway can alone avert. Obey then the will of the gods, which they have revealed to me, and the years of thy future life shall be many and blessed."

At her aunt's bidding, Gerda dried her tears, and set forth meekly for her father's house. Here, if truth must be told, she met with but a sorry welcome from Sigurd, who, at that time, was far too much occupied with plans of vengeance for the insult under which he was smarting to bestow any thought on a useless girl. So having installed her in her dead mother's bower, he left her to herself, and soon totally forgot her presence in the castle.

Three long summer days, from the rising to the setting of the sun, did the daughter of the great chieftain sit patiently at her chamber window, pondering in her mind what might be the danger for which her aunt had bidden her be prepared. On the fourth afternoon, behold a horseman came riding up the hill, and, dismounting at the gate, called loudly for admittance. He wore no armour, nor did he carry any weapon save a golden-hilted sword, and the richness of his dress and the gallantry of his bearing, gave him the air of a bridegroom, or of a wedding guest at least. Now, as the stranger strode across the court, a rose fell from Gerda's bosom at his feet: looking up, he beheld the maiden, and having saluted her, he placed the flower in his jewelled cap and passed on into the castle, following a man-at-arms to the presence of Sigurd. Then Gerda threw a veil over her head, and gliding down the staircase, hid herself in a corner of the great hall.

"Who art thou, and wherefore hast thou sought the home of Sigurd?" asked the chieftain, in a voice which savoured little of welcome, as the stranger strode boldly to his side.

"I am Björn, son of Swerker, and I bring back thy beard, which I stole as thou didst lie sleeping in the wood," answered the young man. And suiting the action to the word, he drew from beneath his mantle a mass of tangled red hair. Yes; it was, without doubt, the sacred beard of Sigurd, and in a moment, a hundred swords were raised to strike the shameless offender to the ground. But with a frown their

lord repressed his vassals' officious zeal—Sigurd's hand alone was worthy to avenge Sigurd's beard.

"What evil spirit tempted thee, miserable youth, to commit so black and senseless a crime?" asked the stern chieftain with a frown, which would have slain most men; but which had no effect at all on the reckless Björn.

"The same spirit of mischief that hath ever possessed me," answered he, with a laugh; though, of a truth, I thought for once in my life to do a wise act, whereby I should earn thy friendship. When I saw an old man, in a ragged grey cloak, sleeping alone on the bare ground I thought to myself, 'How dare this beggarly fellow boast a beard that for length and beauty may vie with the beard of Sigurd, with the fame whereof the whole world doth ring!' In my anger at his presumption, I drew my knife, and cut off the offending growth with a dexterity to which his unbroken slumber bore testimony: only, as ill-luck would have it, it was Sigurd himself, and not some impudent rival of his, that I shaved; for which blunder, methinks, I am about to pay with my life."

Now, when Sigurd saw the young man's fearless bearing, he wished in his heart that the gods had granted him such a son; yet, for his oath's sake, he would not spare Björn, but bade his followers bring him in the great block of wood that stood in the kitchen, that on it he might strike off the culprit's head.

As they hastened to obey his commands, a message was brought to Sigurd from his daughter, saying: "Come to me quickly, for it hath been revealed to me wherefore my Aunt Asfrieda sent me hither." And Sigurd went to the Lady Gerda, leaving Björn standing in the hall.

Ten minutes, twenty minutes, half an hour passed away, and still Sigurd did not return, and his friends began to murmur aloud at his delay. When Björn saw their impatience, he said: "Of a truth, worthy friends, it is I who have most cause to complain, for if Sigurd come not quickly, I shall neither dine to-day on earth, nor yet sup in Valhalla."

All who heard him laughed grimly at the jest, and one old warrior filled a goblet of wine, and gave it to Björn.

"I thank thee, my courteous foe," said the young man; "but ere I drink, tell me, I pray thee, the name of the maiden who threw me the rose that I wear in my cap?"

Ere any man could answer, the great door of the hall was thrown open, and Sigurd appeared, leading in his daughter, arrayed as a bride. A murmur of astonishment ran through the hall as Gerda, with faltering steps and a cheek whiter than the snow on her native mountains, advanced towards Björn, who, totally unabashed by the unexpected apparition, boldly quaffed off the goblet to the health of the fairest maiden in Norway.

"Since thou findest my daughter so fair, Sir Björn, methinks thou wilt not hesitate to save thy life by wedding her," said Sigurd, abruptly.

Björn's eyes sparkled, his cheeks glowed, and he made a hasty movement towards the maiden.

But Gerda grew even paler than before, and lifted her eyes to the young man's face with such a look of despairing supplication that his outstretched hand fell by his side, and involuntarily he drew back.

"What means this folly, girl?" cried her father, with an angry frown. "Give thy hand without more ado to this youth; for by the beards of my ancestors, I swear thou shalt have no other bridegroom."

"Then will thy daughter surely die unwed," quoth Björn, bluntly, "for my hand is pledged to another: and though for one moment's space this maiden's beauty—and perchance, too, the love of life—had well-nigh made me forget my plighted troth, yet will I never prove faithless to my bride."

"Canst thou wed with her in the grave, thou fool?" asked Sigurd, scornfully. "Since thou art hopelessly lost to her, what matters it whether it be by death or marriage?"

"To her, perchance, it matters little," answered Björn, gravely, "but to me it matters much. I jest not with my own honour, great Sigurd, though I may sometimes trifle with other men's beards."

With a gesture half triumphant, half appealing, Gerda turned to her father.

"Be silent, child," said Sigurd, severely. "I have more to ask of this youth, ere I renounce my purpose of making thee his wife. Tell me now, Björn, who is the maiden for whom thou art ready to lay down thy life?"

"Of a truth, I know not her name," answered Björn.

"Men of ancient race wed not with nameless maids," said Sigurd, sternly. "Her beauty must be great indeed to beguile thee into so rash an act. Is she fairer than the bride whom thou dost reject for her sake?"

"Nay," stammered Björn, blushing and looking down, "thy daughter is the fairest maiden on whom I have ever gazed, for the face of my betrothed I have never yet beheld."

"Thou mockest us, Björn," cried Sigurd, angrily, "and there is no such maiden. Prithce, is this a time for jesting?"

"I do not jest, Sigurd," answered Björn; "I am, indeed, betrothed to a maiden whose face I have never seen. If thou wilt grant me a few minutes longer life, thou shalt learn how this came to pass."

"Be brief," quoth Sigurd. And Björn told his tale.

"Two years ago, I was hunting in a remote part of Sweden, when one day I missed my road among the mountains, and wandered about for many hours, seeking vainly for some castle or village where I might

find food and shelter for the night. At last, just before sunset, I reached the summit of a precipitous cliff, and peeping over the edge, I beheld a small and beautiful valley, dotted with groups of stately trees, through which a dozen narrow footpaths wound in and out, in so intricate and bewildering a manner, that my head grew giddy in the vain effort to detect where one ended and another began.

"Some one must surely dwell in this fair valley, thought I, and forthwith I grasped the projecting roots of an old pine-tree and, swinging myself over the edge of the cliff, dropped lightly down on to a bed of thick green moss at its foot. Once in the valley, I was amazed to find that along the borders of the paths with I had noticed from above, grew shrubs and flowers such as I had never before beheld in our northern clime, while countless tiny fountains filled the air with their pleasant murmur. Yet, though on every side I beheld these signs of human skill and care, I could discover no dwelling in the valley, nor yet any outlet by which to escape from it. My first feelings of wonder and admiration were rapidly giving way to uneasiness and alarm, when turning suddenly round the angle of a projecting rock, I beheld a veiled lady, seated on the sward. Alarmed by my unexpected appearance, she sprang to her feet and seemed for a moment about to take flight; but my words and looks soon reassured her, and I had little difficulty in inducing her to resume her seat, and listen to the story of my wanderings. When I had ended my tale she spoke, and I started as I heard her voice, for tones so sweet, so musical had never before fallen on my ear.

"'Since thy rashness hath brought thee into my enchanted valley, Sir Knight,' she said, 'thou must be content to tarry here till I give thee leave to depart.'

"'Since there is no way out of thy realm, I must perforce remain in it for ever,' answered I. The lady laughed, and her laugh was sweeter even than her spoken words.

"'If there is no way out of my valley, how then did I come hither?' asked she gaily. 'Dost think that, like thee, I dropped from yonder rocks?'

"'Of a truth, fair lady,' answered I, 'thy presence here is a mystery which my poor wits are too dull to solve.'

"'Who bids thee solve it; and how knowest thou that I am fair?' asked the veiled lady quickly.

"'I read thy beauty in thy voice,' answered I. 'My mother's voice was sweet and low like thine, and there was no woman in Norway fairer than she.'

"'Art thou then a Norwegian?' asked the stranger, and when I answered 'Yes,' she questioned me of my land, and its people, and its heroes, and we talked together till the moon rose above the mountain tops. Then said the maiden—and I fancied she sighed as she spoke—'The time hath now come for thy deliverance, but ere I set thee

free, thou must find a ransom worthy of thee to give, and of me to take.'

"Then I offered her the gold chain from my neck, and the jewelled clasp from my cloak, but with neither of these would she be content. 'Then must I remain thy captive, for I have nothing else wherewith to buy my freedom,' said I.

"Give me the ring from thy finger, and I will release thee,' said she quickly.

"Now this ring had been my mother's betrothal ring, and I had vowed to her on her death-bed that it should never be worn by any woman save her whom I had chosen for my wife; so, when the maiden asked it from me, I sat long silent, debating in my heart whether she was one whom the son of Swerker might wed without dishonour; for I needed not the voice of Sigurd to teach me that men of noble race mate not with maidens of low degree. But when the lady marked my perplexity, she rose up proudly, saying: 'Keep thy ring, Sir Knight; I will nought of a ransom that is given with grudging. Go back into the world, and get thee ears that may reveal to thee not only my beauty, but my worth.'

"When I heard these words, I was ashamed of my doubts, and taking the ring from my finger, I placed it upon hers. 'Now art thou my betrothed,' said I, 'and though I should never behold thee again, yet can I never wed another.'

"Yea,' answered the maiden softly, 'now are we betrothed, but the wedding, I trow, will not be yet.' Then she loosed a scarf which she wore as a girdle around her waist, and, having bound my eyes, she led me by the hand through what I deemed to be a winding passage underground, till of a sudden the night wind blew coldly in my face, and I knew I stood once more on the open mountain side.

"Now thou are free to see again,' said the lady, as she dropped my hand.

"In a moment I had torn the scarf from my eyes, but, in that moment, my guide had vanished, and though I lingered long amongst those mountains, never again did I behold my unknown bride, or the enchanted valley of which she was the queen."

"For that, at least, thou mayst count thyself in luck," quoth Sigurd, as Björn ceased to speak. "Of a surety this veiled maiden was some evil spirit, and if thou dost not soon find a priest to absolve thee from thy bargain, she will doubtless return and drag thee down to hell."

"That she was no daughter of earth, I myself have long believed," answered Björn, thoughtfully; "but that she was in league with hell, neither thou nor any man shall ever persuade me, though, were she the daughter of the Evil One himself, I would still keep faith with her."

A silence followed Björn's bold words; a silence broken at last by a laugh so soft and musical that it scarce seemed to fall from mortal lips.

Yet sweet as was that sound, he who had stood unmoved before the wrath of Sigurd grew pale and trembled as it stole upon his ear.

"Laugh, oh laugh again, sweet voice," cried Björn, as he sank on the ground at Gerda's feet, "and that music for which I have so long vainly thirsted shall waft my spirit to the gods."

Then Sigurd laid the hand of Gerda in the hand of Björn, son of Swerker, saying: "Well, O Björn, hast thou borne this trial of thy truth, and well for thee that thy soul was proof against temptation; for, by the beard of which thy hand despoiled me, hadst thou been willing to barter away honour for life, I would have slain thee before my daughter's eyes. Take now the bride to whom thou didst plight thyself with thy mother's ring, for thou art worthy to be to Sigurd the son whom the gods denied."

Then—whilst Björn gazed with rapture on Gerda's beautiful face, as she told how, meeting him in the valley to which there was no access save through the subterranean passage, known only to her adopted mother and herself, she had recognized at a glance the future bridegroom whose form she had oft beheld in Asfrieda's magic mirror. The men-at-arms carried the block back to the kitchen, where it did good service in the preparations for the marriage feast, and messengers were despatched in hot haste to the bridegroom's castle to apprise his vassals of their lord's good fortune.

Of all that afterwards befell, nought need here be chronicled, save only that Sigurd and his people—that Björn might live and they not be foresworn—never again suffered the hair to grow upon their chins: and as they soon learned to think that the custom they had adopted must be the only one in accordance with the will of the gods, they waged such ceaseless war against all those of their neighbours who refused to follow their example that, during the lifetime of that generation, beards became as rare in Norway as icebergs at the equator, or palm-trees at the pole.



AT THE GREEN DRAGON.

HAWORTH-ON-THE-HILL was in those days a pleasant, quiet, country place; but in the last few years a railway and a clique of speculators have completely changed its aspect: and to-day it is as thrifty, smoky a town as you would care to see.

In those good old days the firm of John Elliott and Co. monopolized all the banking business of the town; now there are half a dozen banking houses all more or less flourishing, and the bulls and bears form anything but a happy family.

The heroes of my story, Charles Creese and Richard Kirke, were clerks to this firm of John Elliott and Co. They were just entering the years of manhood. There was but slight difference in their ages, though Charles, being the more robust and the taller of the two, appeared to be the elder. He was good-hearted and clear-headed, possessing that invincible perseverance which is so desirable a quality where success in business is concerned. Being young, he had a high opinion of his own superiority over the majority of his fellow-beings, and the airs of patronage he assumed to his friend Richard Kirke were excessively amusing to the observer.

Kirke, however, never noticed this assumption of superiority, or if he did, smiled quietly to himself and forgot all about it. Richard Kirke possessed twice the intellect of his friend—for he and Creese were always on the best of terms, in spite of the latter's conceit—although he showed an unconquerable inaptitude, that almost amounted to stupidity, in business matters. He was handsome, with blue eyes, and chestnut hair. He seemed to enjoy perfect health, but at times his cheeks would pale, and his clear eyes grow shadowed; the moment afterwards he would assume an air of unusual gaiety, which was only a mask to conceal his depression.

Richard Kirke, like his friend, was an orphan; unlike his friend, he was not wholly alone in the world—his sole relative was an aunt, Mrs. Morton.

This old lady was wealthy. Besides her husband's money, which was considerable, she had inherited the fortunes of several other members of her family: she was likewise the possessor of an amount of self-will and prejudice fully equalling her wealth. Her principal hobby was dislike to the modern systems of education. If a young man could read and write, she believed that was sufficient; intercourse with the world would teach all that is necessary besides these two requisites. "Colleges are humbugs," she declared; *her* nephew and heir-presumptive should never enter one. He must become a man of

business. And, in practical illustration of her theory, Richard entered the establishment of Elliott and Co. Mrs. Morton meant well, but I think she made a mistake in placing her nephew there. His talents pointed in another direction; he wished to study, and, in spite of every obstacle, he did study with such good effect that during the three years of his clerkship, he succeeded in remedying the effects of a very insufficient education. His aunt took care that he was not too well supplied with funds. She wanted him to rough it. The best schooling, she always added, for getting a man into good, self-denying, business habits.

The two clerks boarded with a quiet, respectable family in Haworth: Richard, because his aunt wished it; Charles, because economy was an object.

One morning Richard came hurrying down the steep street (all the Haworth streets were steep) at a later hour than usual. Creese was in the office waiting for him. His eyes were brighter than usual, and the half smile on his lips told that something pleasant had happened.

"Congratulate me, Charlie," he said, hanging up his coat; "my business days are nearly over."

"Are you going to leave?" asked Creese, a shade of regret in his tone. He did not like the idea of losing his only friend.

"Yes—and you're going too."

"I say, Dick, Elliott hasn't given us the sack, has he?" he demanded anxiously.

Dick laughed.

"No such good luck as that. The truth is, I received a note last night from my aunt. She has actually come to Haworth without letting me or any one else know it, and is staying at the Green Dragon."

"The Green Dragon!" Charles exclaimed, dropping his pen and staring at his friend.

I will explain the cause of his surprise. Haworth-on-the-Hill in those days was, though dull, exceedingly respectable; for this reason a black sheep in its midst was all the more conspicuous for its rarity. This black sheep was the landlord of the hotel quaintly named the Green Dragon. Not that any crime had ever been proved against him. He was only suspected. Several robberies had been committed and people whispered that this man, James Griffiths, had had a hand in them. However this might be, respectable people seldom frequented the Green Dragon.

"The Green Dragon!" Charles repeated.

Dick looked vexed.

"I visited her this morning," he said, "and told her, among other things, the general opinion of the place. She grew quite angry, and said she was too old to be advised by a mere boy; that she gave no credit to such silly falsehoods; that her friend General somebody or

other had once stayed at the Green Dragon ; and that, if all this were not enough to disprove such rumours, the fact that *she* honoured it by her presence would restore its reputation. I was so taken aback by the last assertion that I couldn't say another word on the subject."

"What is her object in coming to Haworth? I think you said she had not visited the town for many years."

"Oh, Charlie, that's the best of it! She wants to make arrangements for starting me in business—wants to see me fairly settled in life before going out of the world, she says. Only think how jolly it will be to be my own master! I told her it was of no use my thinking of setting up for myself without a partner: that I never should have enough talent to succeed single-handed. So she asked me if in my experience I had met with any one who could and would join me, she supplying the necessary capital. Of course I mentioned your name."

Charles's face flushed, and expressed the gratitude he was unable to speak. Dick executed a gleeful pirouette on the toe of his boot, forgetting that Mr. Elliott was in the next room and might any moment pounce out upon him.

"I'm much bothered," he continued, sitting down, "about her stopping at the Green Dragon. She has a large sum of money with her too, I understand. If you will call with me this evening, you may be able to persuade her to leave that house, or, at least, to lodge the cash in a safer place."

"I'll try," returned Charles, having no doubt of his success. Was he not President of the Haworth Sylvan Debating Society? What human being could resist that eloquence which had so often overpowered his fellow members? So, putting his pen behind his ear, he began to think how he would go about it.

At that moment Mr. Elliott entered with some accounts, and put the orator's reflections to flight.

Evening came at last. After tea the young men started to walk to the other end of Haworth, where the Green Dragon stood.

Richard Kirke seemed strangely nervous. He walked silently beside his friend, who was mentally rehearsing the speech that was intended to make the most favourable impression on Mrs. Morton's mind. Once Richard opened his lips as if about to speak, hesitated, and again relapsed into silence.

"Charlie," he said at last, "I am going to tell you a secret that has never been told out of our family."

"A secret!" exclaimed his friend.

"A matter of great importance—of life and death."

"But allow me to remind you, my dear Dick, that the street is not exactly the place for an important disclosure."

"It is just as safe as any other. Walls have ears; I'm not sure that

the air has ; besides I have put it off too long, and I want to tell it now. You may laugh at me, but I feel as if some misfortune were about to happen, and in case—anyhow I think I'd better make a clean breast of it. I shall be the happier when it's done."

"You are morbid, Dick. Heave ahead though, if it will do you any good," returned Creese, resignedly.

"Well, Charlie, there's been an hereditary disease—I suppose I may call it so—in our family for generations. The Kirkes, in their pride, have always kept the existence of this infirmity a secret. Even my aunt has never known it—although her first husband was my father's brother. It afflicted my father (he was the only Kirke who had a remedy), and he lived but a short time after it. The shock killed him. The knowledge that my turn will surely come, embitters my life."

Charles was listening intently; he had forgotten all about his speech.

"Any member of our family who suddenly experienced the shock of an exciting event fell into a trance exactly resembling death. If the trance was not broken within ten days after the time of its commencement, the sufferer died—the trance became really death !"

"This is indeed strange."

"And fearful ! My great-grandfather was an unusually robust man. The suddenly told news of his wife's death brought on this trance. The doctors came ; they were useless ; but on the eighth day he awoke as well as ever, and died at the age of seventy—thirty years after the attack. For a generation before him not one Kirke had escaped alive. Once, when my grandfather grew very angry it came on. He died—but for the preceding ten days you could have seen the light and colour of life in his eyes, lips, and cheeks."

"Horrible ! But—"

"Wait. My father, haunted by the dread expectation of this scourge of his race, spent half his fortune in seeking a cure. He succeeded, at length, in procuring from a German chemist a liquid, which, if administered before the lapse of ten days, awakens the sleeper. If the ten days go by, it is worthless."

"After all, Dick, *you* may never feel any violent shock, or be subject to the disease."

"Is it likely that I shall prove an exception to the general rule ? No, Charlie, I fear it is not. Now, I have left a phial of the liquid of which I spoke on the table in your room. I stepped in before you came up this evening. If *that* should ever happen—I have a presentiment it will do so shortly—" the poor fellow shuddered,—"*pour* the contents of that phial down my throat."

"I promise," said Creese, solemnly, clasping his friend's hand. Words were too weak to express his sympathy.

Kirke thanked him, and looked as if a great weight had been lifted from his mind by the disclosure. As indeed it had.

By this time they had reached the Green Dragon. It was situated in what had once been the most aristocratic portion of the town; but Fashion had beckoned her votaries in another direction, and for many years the Green Dragon had been an inn, though it still retained many of the characteristics of its former grandeur.

The present landlord, an obsequious, repressed-looking, snake-eyed specimen of humanity, met the young men at the door, and ushered them up-stairs into Mrs. Morton's sitting-room.

Mrs. Morton sat near a table, upon which rested her books and a work-basket. She was a thin, old woman, plainly dressed, with a sharp, resolute, yet not unkindly expression on her wrinkled face.

Dick introduced his friend.

"You are punctual," she said, with a short nod. "I like punctuality—the more because it's old-fashioned and out-of-date. I suppose Richard has told you why I wished to see you."

Richard said he had. Charles merely bowed, feeling somehow that his oratorical display would be wasted on this old lady.

"Am I to conclude that you are willing to enter into a partnership with my nephew, I supplying the funds?"

"I should be only too grateful for such an opportunity. It would be the realization of a cherished dream."

"People are usually delighted when there is a prospect of getting hold of other people's money," she said grimly.

"Let it be understood, madam," Charles rejoined, "that if the arrangement of which you speak should be completed, half the contributed capital would be regarded by me as a loan, to be repaid with interest."

"You are independent, Mr. Charles Creese," she said, sarcastically, slightly raising her voice.

"I hope to remain so, madam."

"Indeed! Then you would not be willing to obey my instructions while holding my money?"

"Not unconditionally."

"And why?"

"Because women are not supposed to know the ins and outs of business. You might instruct me to do something that would swamp the firm."

A gleam of laughter shone in her eyes.

"How conceited you men are! But would you obey me in other matters—my own business affairs, for instance?"

Charles hesitated an instant, and then, carried away by his desire to make a speech, began, "In anything not derogatory to my self-respect, or——"

"There! That's enough," she cried, pushing a large book from the table with a crash. "You insult me by such a nonsensical supposition——"

"Excuse me, madam——"

"A woman who has taken care of her property until she's my age, and who has brought—thousands—to Haworth, without telling the fact to a soul, is certainly worthy of some trust. But you had better go, sirs. The insufferable arrogance of beardless boys is scarcely credible. I'll not say another word to-night. To-morrow, perhaps, you will know me better, and will come to see me in a different frame of mind. Good-night."

She waived them off, and they, feeling it best to obey, went out, somewhat crestfallen. In leaving the room they stumbled over the landlord, who was waiting at the room-door with a bottle of water.

"I've been knocking at this door five minutes," he said coolly. "I didn't care to interrupt, unless told to come in."

The door was ajar, and he must have heard every word of the conversation.

"It's all up now!" said Dick, gloomily, as they passed out into the street.

"I am sorry my words offended her. I did not mean them to produce that effect; but plain speaking is always getting me into scrapes."

"You said what was proper," rejoined Dick. "She always was rather eccentric. She will come round, though, to-morrow. I say, Charlie, the landlord is a villainous-looking fellow. I wish you could have said something about her leaving the inn."

"Suppose we go back?" suggested Creese, rather reluctantly. His faith in the effect of his own eloquence had become a little shaken by a near view of Mrs. Morton.

"No," returned Dick; "it would be useless now."

And they went on.

Feeling that the remainder of the narrative can be better given in Creese's own words, I subjoin a portion of a journal written by him during or shortly after the most eventful part of his life.

"February 1. I received a note from that incomprehensible old woman, Dick's aunt, this morning. It ran:—

"Charles Creese—I am going out to dinner; but I shall be at home at nine P.M. Call, with my nephew, at that hour. If you do not find me in, wait. 'SARAH MORTON.'

"It is to be hoped her mood may be more amiable than that of last night.

"February 16. I feel as if I had just awakened from a horrid dream. I can scarcely believe that it is really over; but it is over, though I shudder at the memory of that night's work. The events seem constantly re-enacting before me.

"In compliance with Mrs. Morton's expressed desire, Dick and I set out to pay her a second visit on the evening of the 1st instant. It was

extremely dark when we left home. Neither moon nor stars were visible. The lamps on our route were few and far between. Perhaps the gloom had something to do with it, but I noticed that Dick was unusually low-spirited.

"‘I think that the people of Pompeii must have felt as I do now when the vapour of Vesuvius had begun to roll down upon them,’ Dick said. ‘I am strangely depressed. I feel as if my doom was near.’

"‘You told me something of the sort the other night.’ And I laughed. ‘It’s all fancy!’

"But Dick shook his head.

"It was nearly ten o’clock when we reached the Green Dragon. The front of the house was dark.

"‘Shut up for the night,’ I said, trying the knob. The door was not locked, however, so we entered, finding no light in the hall, and groped our way up the unilluminated stairs. Dick was about a yard in advance, as I had stopped a moment before closing the hall-door to look down the street. We could see the light gleaming through a crack in Mrs. Morton’s door as we went up.

"Dick knocked at the door. It flew open suddenly, and a man sprang out. He passed Dick. I made a clutch at him, but he avoided my grasp, and dashing down the steps, ran out by the hall-door. I was about to follow him, when an agonized moan fell on my ears. I turned, and saw Dick standing in the open doorway. With eyes wildly distended, he was gazing at some object within the room. Before I could join him, he fell, uttering another moan, prostrate on the threshold of the chamber. With a bound, I reached the top of the stairs. The scene that met my eyes is engraven on my eye-balls yet, in all its horror. It will never leave me.

"The room was in disorder. Mrs. Morton lay near its centre, her head resting against the foot of an easy chair. The white ground of the carpet beneath her had turned crimson. Blood was slowly dripping from a wound in her right temple. It needed but a second to assure me that she was quite dead.

"The chamber seemed to have been thoroughly ransacked. Boxes, drawers, and articles of apparel were scattered around. A long steel poker lay near the door, and near it was a roll of bank-notes. Obeying the first impulse—scarcely knowing what I did—I picked up both the poker and the notes. They were stained. A cold shudder ran through me as some of the stain rubbed off on my hands.

"Hurrying steps sounded on the stairs. The landlord came up, followed by a waiter. They both halted an instant before my prostrate friend. Then Griffiths rushed at me, crying:

"‘Seize him! Seize the murderer!’

The waiter and he threw themselves upon me. I struggled with all

my strength, using the poker to defend myself. Like a flash the thought occurred to me that I might be suspected of this terrible crime. I dropped the poker, and immediately surrendered myself. I had forgotten the notes completely. The waiter took them from my unresisting hand.

"My mind grew confused. I could hardly think. Several persons had come up to the room, attracted by the noise of the scuffle. They consisted of hangers-on about the hotel. One of them had knelt down, and was holding Dick's head. He moved aside as Griffiths and the waiter led me out.

" 'That young fellow is a gone case—dead as a door-nail,' I heard the man say.

"Dead! Dick dead! what could he mean? I attempted to disengage myself from my guardians, in order to approach him, but their hold on me was like iron. It was all nonsense, though. Dick could not have died. It might be a swoon. But stay!—was it the trance? The thought of such a possibility filled me with horror, and shocked my mind into activity. What if people would really suspect me of the murder? Appearances might warrant it. I had been found alone with the murdered woman and the bloody instrument—but enough! My blood ran cold. Suppose they should imprison me—how should I be able to help Dick—to use the remedy of which he had spoken? These thoughts were horrible!—horrible! But, after all, they arose from a mere hypothesis, hope whispered. Dick might not have fallen into a trance.

"Plunged in thought I walked along the silent street, noticing that the landlord and the waiter had been replaced by a couple of policemen.

"The most fervent prayer of my life was uttered that night—it was for Richard Kirke—that the trance might be averted.

"The next day's sun shone upon me through a barred window. I was in jail. I had not slept during the night. As the hours crept slowly on, I had looked at my position in every light. My nocturnal reflections had given me additional reason for wishing that my friend might be still alive and in the enjoyment of his usual faculties. The man who had escaped was the murderer no doubt. As he ran down stairs in the dark, I had not recognized him; Dick perhaps had, and could identify him. I had been found near the dead body; the instrument of the murder and the slaughtered woman's notes, were in my possession. The landlord of the Green Dragon and the waiter could swear to all this, and Dick would be the one witness in my favour.

"The jailor, a stolid, red-faced man, entered, bringing my breakfast. He was taciturn at first, but after some vain questioning, I succeeded in learning that they had taken Dick home. He was dead, the jailor

said ; bluntly informing me at the same time, that he supposed I had killed the old woman for her money, and then knocked the young man on the head, so that he could not tell of the deed. Becoming more communicative, he added, that this was the belief of everybody who had spoken to him of the affair. Griffiths, he said, had declared that Mrs. Morton and I had quarrelled on the evening preceding the murder. The barman and the waiter corroborated this, saying they had heard an altercation, and the sound of a fall.

"I myself knew that there had been nothing of the kind. Mrs. Morton had raised her voice, and pushed a book from the table, that was all ; but what might not the landlord of the Green Dragon, if called as a witness, make of these trifling circumstances—especially if he had a motive—especially if he wished to screen himself.

"Was his the figure that had passed us on the stairs ? He bore a bad character, but that was no proof that he had committed this particular crime, I told myself ; yet the suspicion would not leave my mind.

"The jailor's words convinced me that my friend lay in the long-dreaded trance, and that of help from that quarter there was no hope.

"The jailor, having waited until I finished breakfast, was about to leave the cell, when I stopped him. I have resolved to risk all the worldly wealth I possessed, if necessary, on one hope.

"Do you wish to earn some money ?" I asked.

"He looked at me inquiringly, and answered, 'Of course.'

"Well, it's nothing that will compromise you in any way ; I don't want to break jail. You shall have, say twenty pounds.'

"He laid down his tray of dishes, and prepared to listen to my proposal.

"Do you know the house to which Mr. Kirke has been conveyed ?"

"No. 9, River Street," he answered readily.

"Well, you must go there, and ask to be shown to Charles Creese's room. Tell them who you are, and that I have sent you. On the table you will find a phial—the only one there—bring it to me, and I will instruct you further.'

"All right, sir.'

"In an hour he returned with a small phial, filled with a colourless liquid, and bearing a label upon which Dick had written, 'You know when to use this.' The jailor was extremely reluctant to give it to me. He feared I intended to poison myself.

"Can you get out of jail again ?" I asked.

"He answered in the affirmative.

"Do you think you could obtain access to the room in which Richard Kirke is lying ?"

A look of surprise overspread the man's stolid countenance.

"I dare say I could manage it, sir."

"Do so, then. You will find him to all appearance dead. Open his mouth and force this liquid down his throat; then watch the effect. Here is an order for five pounds. If the experiment end as I hope, I will write you another order on the Haworth bank for the additional fifteen."

"The man took the money, looking as he did so as if he suspected that I was a lunatic. 'Well, this here stuff can't do the dead fellow any harm; but to pay twenty pounds——'"

"I am willing to pay it. Two lives, perhaps, depend on the result."

"He left me. Several hours passed. I hope never to live through such hours again. Next to despair, suspense is the most harrowing emotion that can afflict a human heart and mind. If it be true that mental torture has power to turn the hair grey, mine should have turned white while I waited the jailor's return. Fearful suppositions and forebodings agitated me. A hundred wild fears crossed my brain.

"A noise was heard outside the door. Footsteps were approaching. My heart ceased to beat.

"The jailor entered, and close behind him, pale and weak, came Richard Kirke!

"You have saved me, Charlie," he said.

"The rest of the money, if you please, sir," broke in the jailor, "and you are at liberty yourself, now, for we want this cell for Jim Griffiths. The policemen are bringing him in."

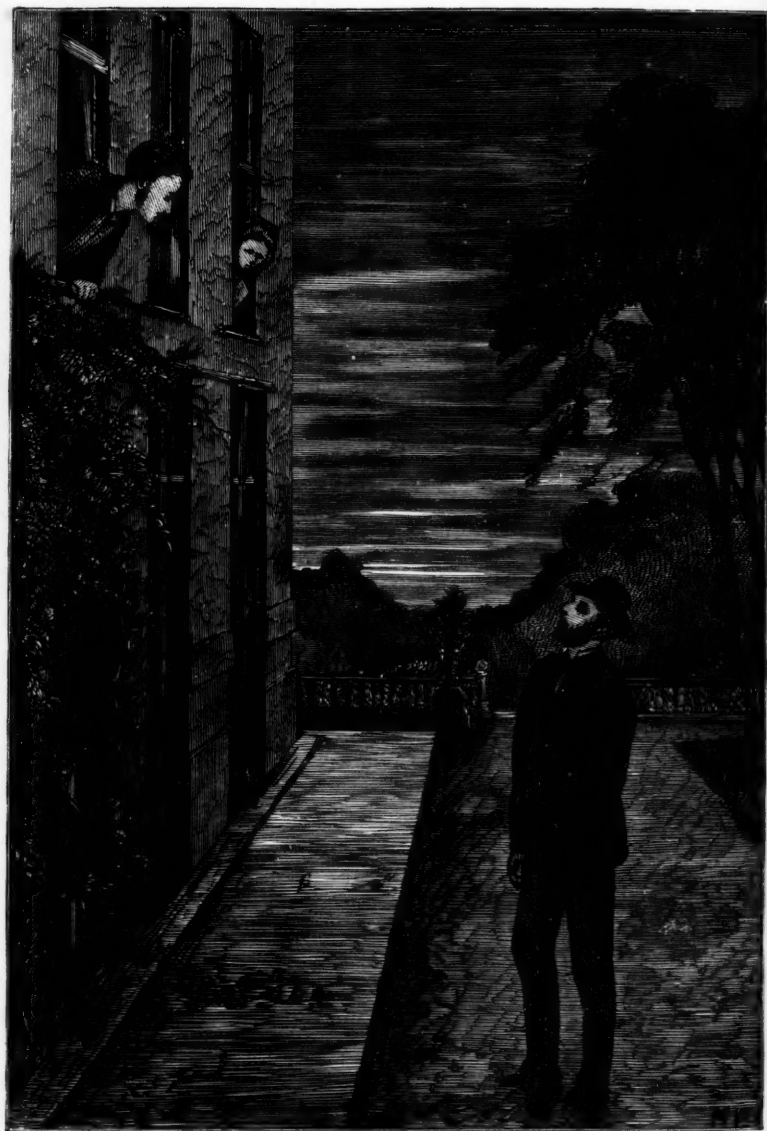
"Dick had recognized the landlord as he passed him on the stairs. On examination everything of any value contained in the Green Dragon was found to be packed up ready for removal. Griffiths had doubtless intended to fly after obtaining Mrs. Morton's money. Our arrival induced him to alter his plan, and suggested the idea of throwing the blame on one or both of us. The waiter was likewise arrested as an accomplice.

"March 1.—The landlord of the Green Dragon is no more. Last night he escaped from prison, by bribing the jailor. He attempted to swim the river. The night was rough; and to-day his body was washed ashore on the sands below Haworth. I suppose they will discharge the waiter.

"By his aunt's will, Dick inherits her entire fortune. To-morrow he starts for college, while I shall begin business here on my own account. It is not likely that the trance will ever come to him again—for there is no record that it has ever afflicted more than once any member of the family. However, he has the German chemist's remedy; and, whatever may befall him, a friend who will be true to him to the last."

LITANY FOR A SOUL DEPARTING.

"LORD, come to her assistance!"
 From heaven's mysterious distance :
 From Death's chill stream this sinking spirit save,
 As by Thy hand once Peter walked the wave.
 "Grant her eternal light,"
 To shine upon Death's night :
 She shuddering meets the midnight of the tomb
 That shuts her in, in solitude and gloom.
 Oh, Angels ! that this life,
 With all its pain and strife,
 Have watched to mark its wanderings astray,
 Then with slow-folded wings have turned away—
 Come once again to meet,
 With salutations sweet,
 This faint, worn, trembling pilgrim at the door
 Whose closing shuts her in for evermore.
 Oh, Saints ! all pure and holy,
 Receive this spirit lowly ;
 Whisper to her, as Christ hath said of such,
 "Much is forgiven, for she hath lovèd much."
 Oh, pure white lilies, fold
 Your petals in her hold,
 As when ye close them at the chill night air ;
 Or like her penitent pale hands in prayer.
 Go with her, fading flowers,
 From out this world of ours—
 Her grasp must soon loose faintly from our own :
 With you soft-clasped she will go forth alone.
 And though the angels greet her
 With smiles serener, sweeter,
 Let ours go with her, to await their dawn,
 As summer sunset almost meets the morn.
 To Thee, Lord, have we cried ;
 Who shall Thy wrath abide,
 If Thou, oh, Lord ! shalt mark iniquity ?
 Out of these depths, oh, hear us cry to Thee !



M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

EDMUND EVANS.

Miss Blake heard the crash of the gravel on the window, and thought it must be housebreakers.